



ASIIN Seal

Accreditation Report

Bachelor's Degree Programmes

Biology

Water bioresources and aquaculture

Ecology

Forestry

Master's Degree Programmes

Biology, Genetics specialisation

Biology, Molecular biology specialisation

*Ecology, Environmental protection in agriculture
specialization*

Provided by

Western Caspian University, Baku

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A About the Accreditation Process

Name of the degree programme (in original language)	(Official) English translation of the name	Labels applied for ¹	Previous accreditation (issuing agency, validity)	Involved Technical Committees (TC) ²
'Biologiya' ixtisası üzrə bakalavriat səviyyəsi	BS degree in 'Biology'	ASIIN	-	10
'Su bioehtiyatları və akvakultura' ixtisası bakalavriat səviyyəsi	BS degree in 'Water bioresources and aquaculture'	ASIIN	-	08
'Ekologiya' ixtisası üzrə bakalavriat səviyyəsi	BS degree in 'Ecology'	ASIIN	-	10
Meşəçilik ixtisası bakalavriat səviyyəsi	BS degree in 'Forestry'	ASIIN	-	08
'Biologiya' ixtisasının 'Genetika' ixtisaslaşması üzrə magistr səviyyəsi	MS degree in 'Biology', specialization in 'Genetics'	ASIIN	-	10
'Biologiya' ixtisasının 'Molekulyar biologiya' ixtisaslaşması üzrə magistr səviyyəsi	Master's degree in 'Biology', specialization in 'Molecular biology'	ASIIN	-	10
'Ekologiya' ixtisasının, 'Aqrar sahədə ətraf mühitin mühafizəsi' ixtisaslaşması üzrə magistr səviyyəsi	Master degree in 'Ecology', specialization in 'Environmental protection in agriculture'	ASIIN	-	08
Date of the contract: 10.03.2025				
Submission of the final version of the Self-Assessment Report: 08.08.2025				
Date of the onsite visit: 08.-09.10.2025				

¹ ASIIN Seal for degree programmes

² TC: Technical Committee for the following subject areas: TC 08 – Agriculture, Forestry, and Food Sciences, TC 10 – Biology, Life Sciences

<p>at: Campus Western Caspian University, Baku</p>	
<p>Expert panel:</p> <p>Prof. Dr. Alois Palmeshofer, University of Würzburg</p> <p>Prof. Dr. Sascha Buchholz, University of Münster</p> <p>Dr. Sonja Kleinertz, University of Bremen</p> <p>Yusif Abiyev, Baku State University</p> <p>Dr. Uwe Sayer, Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) International</p> <p>Humay Aliyeva, student at Baku State University</p>	
<p>Representative of the ASIIN headquarter: Johann Jakob Winter</p>	
<p>Responsible decision-making committee: Accreditation Commission for Degree Programmes</p>	
<p>Criteria used:</p> <p>European Standards and Guidelines as of May 15, 2015</p> <p>ASIIN General Criteria, as of March 28, 2023</p> <p>Subject-Specific Criteria of Technical Committee 08 – Agriculture, Forestry, and Food Sciences as of June 23, 2023</p> <p>Subject-Specific Criteria of Technical Committee 10 – Life Sciences as of June 28, 2019</p>	

B Accreditation Status

Result Overview

The most recent decision for the ASIIN Seal was made by the ASIIN Accreditation Commission on 27.03.2026.

Degree Programmes	ASIIN Seal	Validity
Ba Biology	Accredited with requirements	27.03.2026 – 22.04.2027
Ba Water bioresources and aquaculture	Accredited with requirements	27.03.2026 – 22.04.2027
Ba Ecology	Accredited with requirements	27.03.2026 – 22.04.2027
Ba Forestry	Accredited with requirements	27.03.2026 – 22.04.2027
Ma Biology, Genetics specialisation	Accredited with requirements	27.03.2026 – 22.04.2027
Ma Biology, Molecular biology specialisation	Accredited with requirements	27.03.2026 – 22.04.2027
Ma Ecology, Environmental protection in agriculture specialisation	Accredited with requirements	27.03.2026 – 22.04.2027

Fulfilment of the Accreditation Criteria

ASIIN General Criteria / Subject-Specific Criteria	Ba Biology	Ba Water bioresources and aquaculture	Ba Ecology	Ba Forestry
1 Degree programme: Concept, Content & Implementation				
<i>1.1 Objectives and learning outcomes (intended qualification profile)</i>	Fulfilled	Fulfilled	Fulfilled	Fulfilled

B Accreditation Status

ASIIN General Criteria / Subject-Specific Criteria	Ba Biology	Ba Water bi-oresources and aquaculture	Ba Ecology	Ba Forestry
<i>1.2 Title of the degree programme</i>	Fulfilled	Not fulfilled Requirement A6	Fulfilled	Fulfilled
<i>1.3 Curriculum</i>	Fulfilled	Fulfilled	Fulfilled	Fulfilled
<i>1.4 Admission requirements</i>	Fulfilled	Fulfilled	Fulfilled	Fulfilled
<i>1.5 Workload and credits</i>	Not fulfilled Requirement A1	Not fulfilled Requirement A1	Not fulfilled Requirement A1	Not fulfilled Requirement A1
<i>1.6 Didactics and teaching methodology</i>	Fulfilled	Fulfilled	Fulfilled	Fulfilled
2 Exams: System, Concept and Organisation				
<i>2 Exams: System, Concept and Organisation</i>	Fulfilled	Not fulfilled Requirement A5	Fulfilled	Not fulfilled Requirement A5
3 Resources				
<i>3.1 Staff and staff development</i>	Fulfilled	Fulfilled	Fulfilled	Fulfilled
<i>3.2 Student support and student services</i>	Fulfilled	Fulfilled	Fulfilled	Fulfilled
<i>3.2 Funds and equipment</i>	Not fulfilled Requirement A2	Not fulfilled Requirement A2	Not fulfilled Requirement A2	Not fulfilled Requirement A2
4 Transparency and Documentation				

ASIIN General Criteria / Subject-Specific Criteria	Ba Biology	Ba Water bi-oresources and aquaculture	Ba Ecology	Ba Forestry
<i>4.1 Module descriptions</i>	Not fulfilled Requirement A3	Not fulfilled Requirement A3	Not fulfilled Requirement A3	Not fulfilled Requirement A3
<i>4.2 Diploma and Diploma Supplement</i>	Not fulfilled Requirement A3	Not fulfilled Requirement A3	Not fulfilled Requirement A3	Not fulfilled Requirement A3
<i>4.3 Relevant rules</i>	Fulfilled	Fulfilled	Fulfilled	Fulfilled
5 Quality Management: Quality Assessment and Development				
<i>5 Quality Management: Quality Assessment and Development</i>	Not fulfilled Requirement A1	Not fulfilled Requirement A1	Not fulfilled Requirement A1	Not fulfilled Requirement A1

ASIIN General Criteria / Subject-Specific Criteria	Ma Biology, Genetics specialisation	Ma Biology, Molecular biology specialisation	Ma Ecology, Environmental protection in agriculture specialisation
1 Degree programme: Concept, Content & Implementation			
<i>1.1 Objectives and learning outcomes (intended qualification profile)</i>	Fulfilled	Fulfilled	Fulfilled
<i>1.2 Title of the degree programme</i>	Fulfilled	Fulfilled	Fulfilled
<i>1.3 Curriculum</i>	Fulfilled	Fulfilled	Fulfilled
<i>1.4 Admission requirements</i>	Fulfilled	Fulfilled	Fulfilled

ASIIN General Criteria / Subject-Specific Criteria	Ma Biology, Genetics specialisation	Ma Biology, Molecular biology specialisation	Ma Ecology, Environmental protection in agriculture specialisation
<i>1.5 Workload and credits</i>	Not fulfilled Requirement A1	Not fulfilled Requirement A1	Not fulfilled Requirement A1
<i>1.6 Didactics and teaching methodology</i>	Fulfilled	Fulfilled	Fulfilled
2 Exams: System, Concept and Organisation			
<i>2 Exams: System, Concept and Organisation</i>	Fulfilled	Fulfilled	Fulfilled
3 Resources			
<i>3.1 Staff and staff development</i>	Fulfilled	Fulfilled	Fulfilled
<i>3.2 Student support and student services</i>	Fulfilled	Fulfilled	Fulfilled
<i>3.3 Funds and equipment</i>	Not fulfilled Requirement A2	Not fulfilled Requirement A2	Not fulfilled Requirement A2
4 Transparency and Documentation			
<i>4.1 Module descriptions</i>	Not fulfilled Requirement A3	Not fulfilled Requirement A3	Not fulfilled Requirement A3
<i>4.2 Diploma and Diploma Supplement</i>	Not fulfilled Requirement A3	Not fulfilled Requirement A3	Not fulfilled Requirement A3
<i>4.3 Relevant rules</i>	Fulfilled	Fulfilled	Not fulfilled Requirement A7
5 Quality Management: Quality Assessment and Development			
<i>5 Quality Management: Quality Assessment and Development</i>	Not fulfilled Requirement A1	Not fulfilled Requirement A1	Not fulfilled Requirement A1

Requirements

For all programmes

- A 1. (ASIIN 1.5, 5) Transparently evaluate the students' workload in every module and award the ECTS points accordingly.
- A 2. (ASIIN 3.3) Provide a concept and timetable for updating the laboratory facilities and the technical equipment.
- A 3. (ASIIN 4.1) Provide module descriptions for all courses, including the internships and theses.
- A 4. (ASIIN 4.2) Ensure that the grades of all completed modules are outlined in the Transcript of Records.

For BDF and BDWB

- A 5. (ASIIN 2) Introduce a compulsory Bachelor's thesis for all students.

For BDWBA

- A 6. (ASIIN 1.2) Harmonise the programme name in all official documents and websites.

For MDEPA

- A 7. (ASIIN 4.3) Harmonise the new programme design in all regulatory documents and on all websites.

Accreditation History

The programmes have not been previously accredited by ASIIN.

C Characteristics of the Degree Programmes

Name	Final degree (original/English translation)	Areas of Specialisation	Corresponding level of the EQF ³	Mode of Study	Double/Joint Degree	Duration, semesters	Credit points/unit ECTS	First time of offer
Biologiya bakalavriat səviyyəsi	BS Degree in Biology		6	Full time	-	8	240	2017
Su bioehtiyatları və akvakultura ixtisası üzrə bakalavr dərəcəsi	BS degree in Water bioresources and aquaculture		6	Full time	-	8	240	2018
Meşəçilik ixtisası üzrə Bakalavr dərəcəsi	Bachelor's degree in Forestry		6	full-time/ part-time	-	8/ 10	240	2017
Ekologiya ixtisası üzrə Bakalavr dərəcəsi	Bachelor's degree in Ecology		6	Full time	-	8	240	2018
Biologiya ixtisasında magistr dərəcəsi	Master degree in Biology	Genetics	7	Full time	-	4	120	2022
Biologiya ixtisasında magistr dərəcəsi	Master degree in Biology	Molecular biology	7	Full time	-	4	120	2022
Ekologiya ixtisası üzrə magistr dərəcəsi	Master degree in Ecology	Environmental protection in agriculture	7	Full time	-	4	120	2020

³ EQF = The European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning

Western Caspian University (WCU) in Baku is the oldest private higher education institution in Azerbaijan, founded in 1991. Currently, the university consists of 7 schools and 11 departments that offer education in 30 undergraduate, 15 Master's and 9 PhD programmes, hosting about 2,500 students. The main areas of study include information technology, design and architecture, natural sciences, as well as business, economics and hospitality. In international rankings, it is listed among the top 15 universities in the country. All programmes under review are offered by the School of Advanced Technologies and Innovation Engineering and subject to international accreditation by ASIIN for the first time.

For the Bachelor's degree programme Biology (BDB) the institution has presented the following profile on the programme's website:

"Biology is a full-time multidisciplinary programme that provides intensive study in biological sciences. The programme equips students with broad training in biology while providing enough flexibility to specialise in particular sub-disciplines. This major prepares students for careers in education, allied health professions and interdisciplinary fields such as the environment or biotechnology, law, science, journalism, bioscience management, etc. The curriculum and degree are interdisciplinary in nature and provide a broad approach to biology for students. A major in biology allows students to explore various aspects of our natural world. Students may pursue careers in biotechnology, medicine, environmental studies, human and veterinary medicine, scientific research and development, environmental monitoring and regulation, and private design and consulting."

For the Bachelor's degree programme Water Bioresources and Aquaculture (BDWBA) the institution has presented the following profile on the programme's website:

"Water Bioresources and Aquatic Plants is a full-time multidisciplinary programme focusing on the diversity of organisms and their natural compounds, structural and functional organisation of the biosphere and ecosystems as well as different types of biodiversity. Students gain theoretical and practical knowledge of contemporary genetics, heredity and volatility phenomena. WCU students participate in various research projects and laboratory studies in order to implement knowledge and gain hands-on experience."

For the Bachelor's degree programme Forestry (BDF) the institution has presented the following profile on the programme's website:

"The programme focuses on the theory of forestry and forest composition and structure. We explore the role of natural events in forest formation, the application of chemistry breakthroughs in forestry development, the norms of pesticide usage, anatomy, morphology and systematisation of higher plants, climate role in forestry development, the organisation and management of forest agriculture, physiological and biochemical processes in

trees and bushes, the biology of forest animals, forest parasites, and the characteristics of tree species. Students are trained to effectively carry out forestry management planning including measures to control pests and pathogenic organisms as well as analyse forest dynamics and plant genetics. Students may pursue careers in the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, research institutes, international forestry projects, etc.”

For the Bachelor’s degree programme Ecology (BDE) the institution has presented the following profile on the programme’s website:

“The purpose of the Ecology programme is to train high-level specialists in the field of ecology. As per curriculum requirements students develop a new technosphere, evaluate technical innovations at the socio-ecological level, determine their compliance with the laws of the biosphere, study the universe, use theoretical and experimental methods in physics, fundamental constants in natural sciences, and the principles of symmetry and energy conservation. They will learn methods for chemical determination of substances. Students will be able to simultaneously implement project documents and schedules, apply rules of design to technical schemes and drawings, using modern programmes, classify wastes from petrochemical production, have detailed knowledge of the creation of closed water supply systems, environmental protection, neutralisation of gas emissions, efficient use of resources principles, ecological expertise, etc. Graduates work in private organisations, companies, public institutions, research institutes, laboratories, universities and centres that require in-depth environmental knowledge, or specialise in innovation and other general competencies.”

For the Master’s degree programme Genetics (MDG) the institution has presented the following profile on the programme’s website:

“The Genetics master’s program is a comprehensive academic education program covering the theoretical foundations of genetics—one of the most dynamically developing fields of modern biology and biotechnology—and its various applied areas. The main goal of the program is to provide students with deep and systematic knowledge about the laws of heredity and variability in living organisms, the structure and function of genetic material, and the molecular basis of inheritance. Within the program, students receive theoretical and practical training in classical genetics as well as modern subjects such as molecular genetics, genomics, bioinformatics, epigenetics, biotechnology, human and medical genetics, population genetics, and genetic engineering. At the same time, skills to work with modern laboratory equipment and the ability to conduct experimental research in molecular biology and genetics are developed. The program is based on an interdisciplinary approach and involves research and teaching activities closely connected with biology, chemistry, informatics, medicine, and environmental sciences. This enables graduates to successfully work

both in academia and in state and private organizations operating in biotechnology, healthcare, agriculture, and environmental sectors.”

For the Master’s degree programme Molecular Biology (MDMB) the institution has presented the following profile on the programme’s website:

“Molecular biology is one of the main branches of biology that studies molecular-level processes that govern the life activities of living organisms. This field primarily investigates the structure, function, and regulation of genes, the transmission of genetic information, and key molecular mechanisms such as DNA, RNA, and protein synthesis. Molecular biology employs laboratory methods to understand fundamental processes at the molecular level, including storage and expression of genetic information, cell division, mutations, and regulation of gene expression. The most used methods in this field include DNA extraction, PCR, electrophoresis, gene cloning, and genetic engineering technologies. Molecular biology forms the foundation of modern biotechnology, medical genetics, and gene therapy and has extensive applications in life sciences. This field is essential for human health, agriculture, environmental protection, and the development of innovative solutions in industry.”

For the Master’s degree programme Environmental Protection in Agriculture (MDEPA) the institution has presented the following profile on the programme’s website:

“The master’s degree in Environmental Protection in the Agrarian Sector focuses on physical and biological fields of science to help solve environmental problems. Environmental scientists search for concrete answers and practical solutions to help minimise pollution, increase energy efficiency, promote alternative forms of energy, and increase awareness of environmental issues and sustainability. Upon successfully completing the programme, graduates pursue careers in governmental departments (Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, Ministry of Agriculture), NGOs, companies, marine and fishery industry, research laboratories, etc.”

The experts positively highlight the university’s aspiration and determination for quality education, community impact, and internationalisation, which is reflected in the engagement, commitment, and ambition of all levels of the university staff and students. The modern curricula are well-suited to prepare students to address current and future challenges in the respective disciplines. The student-centred learning approach allows students to pursue individual specialisation via elective modules, fosters independent thinking and study organisation, and supports the transfer of knowledge and skills from the university into practice via the pre-graduation internship.

Necessary improvements include an update and expansion of the laboratory capacities and equipment to allow for state-of-the-art methodological education and research, as well as a more closed-up and precise quality assurance monitoring, including stakeholder involvement and workload evaluations. Moreover, a Bachelor's thesis must be established as mandatory curriculum component in the BDF and BDWBA programmes. In that regard, also the students' skills to work with scientific literature should be improved. Further room for improvement is identified with respect to the responsibilities procedures for the application and distribution of financial resources for investment on the programme level, as well as for the allocation of staff working hours to teaching and research. The practical education should be further improved by including laboratory classes already at earlier stages of the programmes and by reducing group sizes for experimental setups. Lastly, the internationalisation strategy of the university should be implemented more intensely on the level of these programmes by fostering both incoming and outgoing student mobility as well as guest lecturing.

D Expert Report for the ASIIN Seal

1. The Degree Programme: Concept, Content & Implementation

Criterion 1.1 Objectives and Learning Outcomes of a Degree Programme (Intended Qualifications Profile)

Evidence:

- Self-Assessment Report
- Study plans of all study programmes
- Objective-module matrices of all study programmes
- Module descriptions of all study programmes
- Education law of the Republic of Azerbaijan
- Ministerial provisions for educational programmes of each discipline
- Websites of all study programmes
 - BDB: <https://wcu.edu.az/en/faculties/biology>
 - BDWBA: <https://international.wcu.edu.az/az/faculties/water-biodiversities-and-accessories-1.html>
 - BDE: <https://wcu.edu.az/en/faculties/ecology>
 - BDF: <https://wcu.edu.az/en/faculties/forestry>
 - MDG: <https://wcu.edu.az/en/faculties/genetics>
 - MDMB: <https://wcu.edu.az/en/faculties/molecular-biology>
 - MDEPA: <https://international.wcu.edu.az/az/faculties/environmental-protection-in-the-agrarian-sector-1.html>
- Discussions during the audit

Preliminary assessment and analysis of the experts:

The experts base their assessment of the learning outcomes on the information provided on the websites, the objective-module-matrices, and in the Self-Assessment Report of the degree programmes under review. They refer to the Subject-Specific Criteria (SSC) of the Technical Committee 08 – Agriculture, Forestry, and Food Sciences and the Technical Committee 10 – Life Sciences as a basis for judging whether the intended competence profiles of the three programmes correspond with the competences as outlined by the SSCs.

As outlined in the university's documentation, there are provisions of the Azerbaijani Ministry of Higher Education which regulate general aspects of study programmes in each discipline in terms of objectives, learning outcomes/ graduate competences, curricular structures, as well the organisation of teaching and assessment. These provisions are the basis for the design of the programmes, including their learning outcomes. The objectives and PLOs of all programmes are published on the programmes' websites and are displayed in the appendix.

As characterisation of the programmes, WCU describes the following objectives of the respective programmes:

BDB: "The program aims to ensure that students acquire fundamental knowledge in their specialty while applying modern teaching and learning methods that enable them to put theory into practice. This approach supports the development of both intellectual and practical skills. Emphasis is placed on the individual development of each student, with attention to their social, emotional, and moral growth. The curriculum is designed to foster critical and analytical thinking, as well as problem-solving abilities. It encourages students to develop creative and innovative thinking, allowing them to find new solutions and approach existing problems from fresh perspectives. Furthermore, the program guides students in using their knowledge and skills for the benefit of society, while promoting ethical behaviour, social responsibility, and professional competence—key elements for success in both the professional world and academic pursuits."

BDWBA: "The main objective of Aquatic Bioresources and Aquaculture is to ensure the sustainable use, protection, and management of living resources in aquatic ecosystems. This specialization aims to train skilled professionals with a strong foundation in aquatic biology, water ecology, and fisheries science. It focuses on the development of modern and sustainable aquaculture practices to enhance the production of fish and other aquatic organisms. Additionally, it promotes innovation and scientific research to support biodiversity conservation, food security, and the economic viability of aquaculture. The program also emphasizes environmentally responsible technologies and contributes to the socio-economic development of rural and coastal communities."

BDF: "The main objective of the Bachelor's degree program in Forestry is to prepare qualified specialists with fundamental knowledge in the conservation, restoration, and sustainable management of forest ecosystems. The program equips students with both theoretical and practical knowledge regarding the ecological and economic significance of natural resources, particularly forests, as well as their protection and efficient use.

Throughout their education, students gain in-depth understanding of forest plant biology, forestry technologies, soil and climate factors, and biodiversity conservation. They also

develop awareness of the role of forests in preserving ecological balance and combating climate change.

The program aims to provide students with practical skills in assessing, mapping, and monitoring forest resources using modern information technologies. It also strives to nurture environmentally responsible, ethically principled, proactive professionals with strong teamwork abilities who are committed to contributing to society and sustainable development.”

BDE: “The Bachelor's degree in Ecology aims to provide students with a solid understanding of ecological principles, including ecosystem dynamics, biodiversity, conservation biology, and environmental processes. It develops their ability to apply scientific methods to ecological research through hypothesis formulation, experimental design, data collection, statistical analysis, and interpretation of results. The program equips students with practical skills in fieldwork, laboratory techniques, and the use of modern technologies such as GIS, remote sensing, and ecological modelling. It also trains them to critically analyse environmental issues, assess human impacts on ecosystems, and propose evidence-based solutions for sustainability and conservation. An interdisciplinary perspective is emphasized by fostering an appreciation of the connections between ecology and related fields such as geography, climatology, sociology, economics, and environmental policy. Furthermore, the program enhances students’ communication skills, enabling them to effectively present scientific findings through written, oral, and visual means. It instils a strong sense of environmental ethics, stewardship, and professional responsibility in the management of natural resources and biodiversity protection. Students gain awareness of global ecological challenges, such as climate change, habitat loss, and invasive species, and are encouraged to engage in local and regional conservation efforts. The degree prepares graduates for professional roles in ecological consulting, environmental management, conservation organizations, and governmental agencies, as well as for advanced academic studies. Finally, it promotes lifelong learning and personal development to help students adapt to emerging ecological issues and scientific advancements.”

MDG: “The aim of the Master's program in Genetics is to provide students with in-depth and fundamental knowledge of heredity and variation, to equip them with modern molecular biology and genetic research techniques, and to prepare them for scientific, diagnostic, and applied professional activities.

Within the scope of the program, students will acquire both theoretical and practical skills in classical, molecular, and cytogenetics, along with hands-on experience in modern laboratory techniques such as PCR, electrophoresis, DNA sequencing, and analysis of DNA, RNA,

and proteins. The program also focuses on developing students' research capabilities, data interpretation skills, and ability to analyse and present scientific information.

The program places particular emphasis on applied knowledge and competencies in fields such as medical genetics, agricultural genetics, population genetics, bioinformatics, and genetic engineering. Students also gain practical preparation in the diagnosis and prevention of genetic diseases.

Furthermore, the program emphasizes the importance of ethical approaches, promoting responsible and professional conduct in genetic research. Graduates of the program will be equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to successfully pursue academic careers or work in sectors such as biotechnology, healthcare, agriculture, and related fields.”

MDMB: The Master's program in Molecular Biology aims to provide students with an in-depth understanding of biological processes at the cellular and molecular levels, to train them in modern laboratory technologies and molecular research methods, and to prepare them for independent work in both scientific research and applied fields.

The program offers comprehensive theoretical and practical knowledge in gene expression and regulation, cell signaling, genetic engineering, recombinant DNA technologies, proteomics, and bioinformatics. It also focuses on developing competencies in molecular diagnostics and various applications of biotechnology.

Students gain hands-on experience in working with advanced laboratory equipment, designing and conducting experiments, analyzing data, and presenting scientific findings. The program also emphasizes professional development based on scientific ethics, biosafety, and principles of interdisciplinary collaboration.

Graduates of the program will possess the necessary knowledge and skills to engage in scientific research and applied work in academic, biotechnological, medical, and agricultural sectors.

MDEPA: “The Master's program in Environmental Protection in Agriculture aims to equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to minimize the environmental impact of agricultural practices, conserve ecosystems, and promote sustainable agriculture. The program focuses on providing students with a deep understanding of environmental protection, soil and water management, agroecology, and ecological sustainability. Students will gain the ability to assess and mitigate the environmental impact of agricultural activities, manage risks related to climate change, biodiversity loss, and ecosystem service degradation, and understand the environmental policies and legal frameworks at both local and global levels. The program also emphasizes the application of sustainable agricultural technologies and practices. In addition, students will develop strong research skills, adopt

interdisciplinary approaches to solving ecological challenges, and cultivate a sense of ethical and social responsibility in agricultural and environmental decision-making.”

In terms of the graduates’ labour market opportunities, the university describes a broad range of private companies, public institutions and government bodies, research institutes and laboratories, as well as universities as employment options. From the presence of external stakeholders during the on-site visit, it becomes clear that especially public regulatory authorities, including e.g. the Azerbaijani Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, and the Institute of the Botany, which are largely employing graduates of the programmes under review. Overall, the industrial stakeholders and potential employers describe WCU students and graduates as fit for purpose and stress their satisfaction with the obtained skillsets which satisfies the experts.

In summary, the experts positively comment on the brief and concise descriptions of the PLOs of all programmes and confirm that they are transparently published in the curriculum documents which are accessible via the respective programmes’ websites. The PLOs adequately represent the qualification level of EQF 6 (for the Bachelor’s programmes) respectively EQF 7 (for the Master’s programmes) and correspond to the provisions of the applicable Subject-Specific Criteria.

Criterion 1.2 Name of the Degree Programme

Evidence:

- Self-Assessment Report
- Ministerial provisions for educational programmes of each discipline
- Websites of all study programmes

Preliminary assessment and analysis of the experts:

According to the Self-Assessment Report, the programmes are regulated by the Ministry of Higher Education which also includes the programme names and degree titles. Graduates of all Bachelor’s programmes are awarded a Bachelor of Science degree, while graduates of all Master’s programmes are awarded a Master of Science degree, which the experts consider suitable for the programmes. They also confirm that both the original Azerbaijani titles as well as their English translations adequately reflect their PLO and curricula. On exception in that regard is the MDEPA programme, which shows a discrepancy between the title and PLOs on one side, and the curriculum on the other side (see section 1.3). This shortcoming needs to be addressed.

However, they wonder about the name of the BDWBA programme, which is not consistently used as, among others, the programme's website states the title "Water Bioresources and Aquatic Plants". According to the experts, either of the titles would adequately reflect the programme, but to ensure clarity and transparency, they require WCU to harmonise the programme's name in all official documents and websites.

Criterion 1.3 Curriculum

Evidence:

- Self-Assessment Report
- Education law of the Republic of Azerbaijan
- Curricular overviews of all study programmes
- Module descriptions of all study programmes
- Objective-module matrices of all study programmes
- Internship guidelines
- Rules for the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications of Foreign Countries
- Rules for Admission to Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Azerbaijan
- Discussion during the audit

Preliminary assessment and analysis of the experts:

Structure and content

The experts base their assessment of the curricula on the curricular structures, as displayed in the appendix below, the module handbooks, as well as further supporting documentation as given in the Self-Assessment Report.

All four Bachelor's programmes have a duration of four years (8 semesters) and a credit load of 240 ECTS credits. One exception is the BDF programme which is offered also in a part-time variant over 10 semesters. According to the Self-Assessment Report, part-time education is not considered feasible for the other programmes as they require more laboratory work, intensive, and continuous practical training. The Master's programmes are designed for two years (4 semesters) and carry 120 credit points. Each semester lasts for 15 weeks and contains a designated workload of 30 credits.

The curricula are developed based on the Course Learning Outcomes which, as transparently indicated in the module descriptions, are derived from the PLO. An objective-module matrix additionally outlines the extent to which the individual modules contribute to the achievement of the PLOs. The curricular structure follows a vertical integration with basic

modules in the first years and advanced and more specialised modules in higher semesters. The modules are classified into common mandatory modules, professional training modules, electives, and the internship which includes the Bachelor's thesis. In the Master's programmes, the thesis forms an independent fifth category of modules. The share of these module groups within the curricula is displayed in the following tables taken from the Self-Assessment Report.

For Bachelor's programmes:

Modules	Type of subject	ECTS
Common mandatory	Compulsory	30
Professional training	Compulsory	120
Elective subjects	Compulsory	60
Intership	Compulsory	30
	Total	240

For Master's programmes:

Modules	Type of subject	ECTS
Common mandatory	Compulsory	14
Professional training	Compulsory	52
Elective subjects	Compulsory	24
Intership (Scientific research and Scientific-pedagogical practice)	Compulsory	12
Thesis	Compulsory	18
	Total	120

Common mandatory modules are compulsory for all students in higher education programmes in Azerbaijan and, for the Bachelor's programmes, include "History of Azerbaijan", "Business and academic communication in Azerbaijani", two modules (in total 15 credits) of English as foreign language, and two elective slots. On the Master level, compulsory modules are "Psychology", "Higher Education Pedagogy", and "Foreign language" (English), and the choice between "Economics" and "Philosophy".

The professional training and elective subjects form the subject-specific core curricula. Major subjects are compulsory, discipline-defining courses which provide the essential scientific knowledge and professional competencies. As the experts learn during the on-site visit, the professional training modules are determined by the national standard curricula of the respective subjects, and the university itself can independently design and offer only the elective subjects. At WCU, the elective modules are organised in "specialised blocks" with usually three options per block. Students have to choose one module out of each block.

In the following, the core subjects of the programmes are distinguished.

In the BDB programme, students build their foundation through major subjects such as "Genetics", "Molecular biology", "Human anatomy and physiology", "Microbiology" and "Biochemistry". These are later complemented by specialised blocks, for example in "Genetic engineering", "Virology" or "Nanobiotechnology", which give students room to explore applied or advanced topics.

The BDWBA programme combines broad scientific training in "General biology", "Ecology", "Fisheries" and "Fish aquaculture" with practical modules like "Aquaculture of invertebrates" and "Fish nutrition". Elective blocks such as "Artificial fish breeding", "Hydrochemistry" or "Oceanography" allow students to specialise in either production techniques or ecological perspectives.

In the BDF programme, the core curriculum is strongly profession-oriented, centred on "Dendrology", "Forestry", "Forest genetics and breeding", "Forest plantations" and "Forest structure". To extend this expertise, elective blocks such as "Forest protection", "Forest certification", or "Recreational forestry" offer applied approaches to forest management and conservation.

The BDE programme is structured around central disciplines like "General ecology", "Ecological chemistry", "Animal ecology" and "Biodiversity conservation", with "Ecological monitoring" providing the methodological basis. Specialised blocks include areas such as "Global environmental problems", "Hydrology" or "Ecological GIS and cartography", linking ecological theory to applied environmental management.

At the Master's level, the MDG programme deepens the scientific focus with advanced courses in "Molecular genetics", "Cytogenetics", "Genomics" and "Bioinformatics". Students may also branch into elective areas such as "Human genetics", "Population genetics" or "Genetics of microorganisms", depending on their research interests.

The MDMG programme emphasises modern laboratory science, with majors such as "Molecular evolution", "Genetic and protein engineering", "Proteomics" and "Research methods of molecular biology". Electives like "Gene regulation and epigenetics", "Signal transduction" or "Molecular phytopathology" allow for more targeted expertise.

Finally, the MDEPA programme integrates environmental sciences with agricultural practice. Core subjects include "Environmental monitoring", "Environmental waste treatment" and "Agrochemistry and environmental protection". Elective blocks such as "Environmental problems of agriculture", "Agroclimatic resources" or "Livestock ecology" connect sustainability issues with concrete agricultural applications.

Overall, the experts are highly satisfied with the curricula of all programmes in both their core as well as elective parts. Only for the BDB programme, they consider whether a better

distribution of the elective modules might be more sensible to allow students to further specialise in certain fields. Currently, some of the elective blocks contain similar or connected modules, like e.g. “Microbiology of Food Products” and “Food Safety” but in the current structure the students can choose only one out of these modules. However, overall they find it suitable for students to get a broad understanding of the discipline’s facets.

Specifically, for the MDEPA programme, the experts positively highlight the curricular idea to connect ecology with business aspects, an approach, the experts find to be still largely missing in today’s understanding of ecology. The business/ economics component is contained in multiple core modules like “Organization of ecological business”, “Philosophy of economics”, and “Micro and macroeconomics”. However, they point out that this curricular component is not contained in the PLOs, and that also the title “environmental protection in agriculture” does not adequately reflect this curricular content. If the curriculum should fully meet the current PLOs and title, modules like “Environmental statistics” (for learning outcome “Analyse and interpret data related to environmental monitoring, agricultural practices, and ecosystem health using scientific and statistical methods), “Project-based and applied biodiversity and environmental monitoring” (for learning outcome “Conduct independent scientific research on environmental protection in agriculture, developing innovative solutions for sustainable farming systems), and “Assessment and evaluation of ecosystem services” (as an important basis for understanding and valuing ecological functions in the agricultural landscape) would be crucial. As the programme is very strongly geared towards interdisciplinary skills and aims to enable students to interact with various stakeholders, the modules should generally be very practice-oriented and project-based. Alternatively, as the experts positively stress the current innovative curricular concept, the PLOs and title would need to be adapted to adequately reflect the curriculum. It needs to be emphasised that this is not just an environmental degree programme but also covers business aspects and economic issues relating to sustainable agriculture. In the end, the experts find it a very interesting interdisciplinary degree programme in the field of sustainable agriculture and environmental economics. Either way, this discrepancy between programme title, PLOs, and curriculum needs to be addressed and the experts therefore require WCU to harmonise the learning outcomes, programme name and curriculum.

Based on this, the experts discuss whether the introduction of a business component would benefit also the other programmes. Generally, a business component is not part of the core curriculum of any of the disciplines, but the experts suggest that it might be a valuable option to give students the opportunity to, as an example, take a business module from the business faculty as an elective. Whether this would be beneficial should be part of the university’s considerations in discussions with industrial stakeholders.

In all Bachelor's programmes, students must complete a 14-week (21 credits) internship at company or institution related to their discipline. According to the Self-Assessment Report, the internship placements are determined based on the students' individual preferences and interests and the list of institutions collaborating with the university. Students can submit their preferences and the programme coordinators try to match the internship placement, if possible, but it is not possible for students to independently choose an internship place. Examples of partner institutions are different hospitals, the Institute of Genetic Resources of the Ministry of Science and Education, the Institute of Zoology of the Ministry of Science and Education, and the Azerbaijan Food Safety Institute. The students also add fish farms, water testing companies, gardening companies, and forest management companies as examples of internship placements. The remaining 9 credits of this block cover the Bachelor's thesis which needs to be prepared after finishing the practical work, or the state attestation (see also criterion 2).

In the Master's programmes, the internship block is divided into scientific research practice and pedagogical practice: the scientific research is aimed at ensuring the connection between the theoretical-methodological knowledge obtained by students and the skills to apply this knowledge in practice. On the other hand, the pedagogical internship is designed to familiarise students with psychological and pedagogical literature on teaching at universities and learn and apply relevant teaching methods and instruments. As the programme coordinators explain, this also involves giving lectures and seminars to Bachelor's students under supervision.

During the on-site visit, the experts learn that, for the Master's programmes, the scientific research practice internship usually lays the bases for the Master's thesis in the final semester. However, in the Bachelor's programmes, there is no direct interlinkage between the internship and the final thesis. The expert would generally consider a practical orientation of the thesis within the environment of a partner institution highly beneficial for the students' opportunities for developing qualitative research questions and implementing the corresponding experiments, which is also advised by the applicable SSC. Moreover, by connecting the internship with the thesis, the time and therefore depth of the students' involvement in a project could be increased. In this regard, they suggest WCU to consider connecting the internship and the thesis.

In summary, the experts confirm that the curricula of all seven programmes enable the students to achieve the respective defined learning outcomes and adequately correspond to the EQF level 6 for Bachelor's degree programmes respectively level 7 for Master's degree programmes. They further conclude that the curricula of all programmes are aligned with the subject-specific criteria of the Technical Committee 08 – Agriculture, Forestry, and Food Sciences, respectively 10 – Life Sciences, which includes, e.g., the provisions for safety

(laws, lab safety, hazard assessment) and practical work. The experts gain the impression that each module represents a well-matched unit of teaching and learning. The structure of the programmes, including the opportunity to choose electives, is generally sensible. Only for the MDEPA programme, the experts see the need to better align the curriculum, programme name, and learning outcomes to either correctly represent the current curricular focus on business and economics in the field of ecology or strengthen the environmental protection aspect within the curriculum.

Internationalisation and student mobility

According to the Self-Assessment Report, WCU has an international mobility programme based on a long list of Memorandums of Understanding with partner universities in Europe, Asia, and the USA. As special focus of the internationalisation strategy is strengthening the ties between Azerbaijan and Germany, as multiple agreements are in the making with German universities and students are actively encouraged to study the German language. WCU is associated with the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) and has direct cooperations among others with the University of Applied Science Schmalkalden. As the representative of the university's international office explains, WCU is currently one of the most active Azerbaijani universities when it comes to internationalisation and student mobility. However, most of these Memorandums and programmes are designed for students in IT, Nursing, and the design school, and therefore no student of the programmes under review has participated or is currently participating. Only two students of the BDWBA programme have conducted extracurricular training respectively laboratory internships in Turkey.

Nevertheless, the organisational foundations for student mobility exist, as the national admission regulations specify that up to 30% of a programmes' credits can be earned at other national and international institutions if approved by the university and the Azerbaijan Ministry of Science and Education. To raise awareness about mobility opportunities, the university regularly organises presentations, seminars, and informative sessions for students. As the experts recognise, almost all students present during the on-site visit would be interested in taking part in mobility activities. Therefore, they recommend WCU to look for programme-specific partnerships that will allow students of the concerned programmes to realise student exchanges. In that regard, they also stress the high potential of incoming student mobility. As there is the option to study the programmes fully in English, it would be easy for them to host students from abroad and foster internationalisation also in this way. In summary, it is recommended to further foster both incoming and outgoing mobility specifically for the programmes under review.

In summary, the experts acknowledge WCU's efforts to foster student mobility and confirm that the university generally promotes student mobility through an appropriate

institutionalised framework. Nevertheless, they still see room for improvement, especially in the potential of hosting international students in the English-speaking tracks of the programmes, and recommend to further foster both outgoing and incoming international student mobility specifically for the programmes under review.

Periodic review

According to the Self-Assessment Report, the curricula are based on national standard curricula and, therefore, only the elective modules can be freely designed by the university. The selection and inclusion of elective courses in the curriculum are discussed at the university's Academic Council. To ensure that students' opinions and interests are taken into account, representatives of the WCU's Student Scientific Society and Student Youth Organisation also participate in these discussions, which also take proposals of stakeholders from the industry into account. As the experts acknowledge, a list shows that different elective modules have been changed or added over the past years. Both students and stakeholders confirm their involvement, although the industrial stakeholders regret that their opportunities to give direct feedback through official channels are limited. They would welcome an improvement of the connection between industry and universities to foster the knowledge transfer. Based on that the experts recommend formalising and strengthening the feedback mechanism with industrial stakeholders (see also criterion 5). The common mandatory and professional training parts are not reviewed at the university level as they are administered by national authorities. According to the provisions of the Azerbaijan education law, there are regular reviews also for this part of the curricula.

In summary, the experts confirm that the curricula are periodically reviewed with regard to the implementation of the programme objectives in a process that involves all relevant stakeholders, including the students. Changes in the programmes are adequately documented. However, a more direct and formalised involvement of the stakeholders is recommended.

Criterion 1.4 Admission Requirements

Evidence:

- Self-Assessment Report
- Education law of the Republic of Azerbaijan
- Rules for Admission to Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Azerbaijan
- Admission rules to the graduate-level of education in higher education institutions of Azerbaijan Republic

- Rules for the Recognition and Equivalence (Nostrification) of Qualifications in the Field of Higher Education of Foreign Countries
- National admission information website: <https://dim.gov.az/en/fealiyyet/qebul-ve-imtahanlar/magistratura>
- Information video for foreign students: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Cmf5oLCZMY>
- Discussions during the audit

Preliminary assessment and analysis of the experts:

According to the Self-Assessment Report and the official admission rules, the admission to university programmes is regulated by the State Examination Centre (SEC). The national education law grants every Azerbaijan citizen the right to one free-of-charge higher education programme at each academic level and grants equal opportunities to every applicant as the admission is carried out based on admission test results. However, as the university representatives explain, this does not mean that tuition is free for all students. Instead, depending on the results of the admission test, there are students who study on a state scholarship basis while other students have to pay regular tuition fees. For students without a scholarship, the tuition fee amounts to AZN 3,200 – 3,900 (EUR 1,600-2,000) per year. For foreign applicants, separate selection procedures are defined, which include an interview and the requirement of tuition payment. The admission of foreign students is also regulated at the national level and managed via an online portal. As the experts positively acknowledge, respective rules for the recognition of qualifications obtained at foreign higher education institutions are defined and apply.

For Bachelor's programmes, the baseline admission requirement is a secondary school certificate, or a recognised equivalent such as a vocational or higher education certificate. All applicants must pass a centralised entrance examination that is conducted in two stages. The first stage of this test is the school-leaving examination and which evaluates the knowledge of three subjects: Azerbaijani language (or Russian, depending on the intended language of instruction), a foreign language, and mathematics. This stage consists of 85 questions in total and carries a maximum score of 300 points. The results of this stage remain valid for two years and allow applicants to participate in the competition for admission either in the same year or the following year.

The second stage of the admission examination is designed around major subject groups that correspond to the chosen field of study. There are four regular groups, each containing three subjects with weighted coefficients, while a fifth group relies only on the results of the first-stage examination. All Bachelor's programmes under review belong to the fourth major group which determines the test in the subjects of biology, chemistry, and physics.

At this stage, applicants answer 90 questions, and the maximum score is 400 points. The results of the second stage are valid only for the academic year in which the exam is taken. Admission is ultimately decided based on the exam performance and competition among applicants. Despite the lack of involvement of the university itself, the experts consider the admission process suitable for the adequate selection of students, which is reflected in the low drop-out rates and the good portion of students who can graduate within the designated study period.

Annually, the university needs to submit an admission plan describing their available capacities to the Ministry of Science and Education, which oversees the SEC, to determine the permitted intake capacities and register them for the selection procedure. For all Bachelor's programmes, WCU has significantly increased the intake capacity over the past years. As the university representatives explain, the admission quotas are exclusively determined by the ministerial authority, and the university is glad to have been granted higher numbers of study places in recent years which accounts for the need of trained personal in these disciplines. The current capacities of the programmes are:

- BDB: 60 places
- BDWBA: 40 places
- BDF: 50 places
- BDE: 40 places

The occupation rate is roughly 90% on average over the past 5 years in all programmes.

For the admission to Master's programmes, there are separate graduate level admission regulations. However, the process is similarly designed, competitive and overseen by the SEC. There is a paper-based test that assesses logical thinking, foreign language, and computer science skills of undergraduate applicants, and there is a complementary subject-specific part for each Bachelor subject of the graduates. Based on the test results, the candidates can apply for their chosen programmes.

The available options are limited to Master's programmes respectively specialisations which are in the domain of the completed Bachelor's degree. During the on-site visit, the experts inquire which Bachelor's degrees are deemed to be compatible with the respective Master's programmes and learn that this is regulated based on a classification of degrees by the ministerial authorities. This classification also encompasses international universities and degree programmes, which, however, can be problematic, as not all relevant programmes and universities appear to be listed and therefore, some students are not eligible for applying in Azerbaijan. The university representatives further elaborate that the university has no opportunity to influence this selection process and does not even see the

applying candidates and their test performances, as this process is exclusively executed by the SEC. While the experts recognise the strict legal framework which determines the admission policy, they would nevertheless deem it helpful to develop own student selection criteria especially for Master's programmes which can be a defining aspect of the university's profile and key aspect of the university's strategy in competing for students internationally. This could be done in combination or within the SEC regulated process. The number of available places at WCU is limited to seven respectively six (MDEPA) students, and all places are filled.

In summary, the experts confirm that the admission requirements and procedures are binding, transparent, and also ensure the recognition of credits obtained at different higher education institutions. The admission requirements ensure the necessary prior qualification of students for the respective programmes. However, the experts recommend establishing a university specific selection system (in combination with the SEC) for student intake to Master's programmes, which would reflect the university's own educative profile and student development strategy internationally.

Criterion 1.5 Workload and Credits

Evidence:

- Self-Assessment Report
- Study plans of all programmes
- Module descriptions of all study programmes
- Rules for the Organization of Education Based on the Credit System at the Bachelor's and Master's Levels and in Basic (Undergraduate) Medical Education in Higher Education Institutions
- Discussions during the audit

Preliminary assessment and analysis of the experts:

As outlined in the documentation, WCU applies the ECTS credit system which is based on the student workload in terms of both contact hours and independent study time. The number of credits per module and the distribution of the workload across the different forms of coursework including lectures, practical activities and independent learning are displayed in the module handbooks. One credit point is set equivalent to 30 hours of work. In all programmes, the designated credit load per semester is 30 ECTS. Thus, the Bachelor's programmes with a duration of 4 years have a credit load of 240 ECTS and the Master's programmes with a duration of 2 years carry 120 ECTS. The distribution of the workload

across independent and in-class workload (lectures, seminars, and laboratory work) is transparently outlined in the study plans. The experts are generally satisfied with the credit system, acknowledge the implementation of ECTS, and deem the workload respectively credit allocation for the individual modules to be sensible. Only for the Bachelor's thesis, the experts deem the allocated number of credits (9 ECTS) to be critically low, as many German universities consider the Bachelor thesis substantial enough only if a minimum of 300 work hours (10 ECTS) were completed for this project. In this regard, the low number of credits can hinder the admission of graduates to other universities abroad, e.g. for Master's programmes. Therefore, they recommend increasing the designated workload and number of credits for the thesis to at least 10 ECTS credits.

Besides that, the experts wonder how the independent workload of the students within the individual modules is accounted for, as no student survey or similar instrument was presented and explained in the documentation. According to the students, some of the teachers ask about the feasibility of the workload of their modules, but it appears that there is no structured workload evaluation. The experts stress the importance of this measure to corroborate and verify the workload distribution as designated by the curriculum and its feasibility for the students. The graduation statistics show that, although a reasonable share of students is able to graduate the programmes on time, the mean graduation time for Bachelor's programmes is still 10 instead of 8 semesters. This appears to be especially problematic in the BDF programme. In that regard, the experts learn that almost 75% of the students work at least part-time besides their studies which explains the delays in study times of some students. Nevertheless, the experts find a structured workload evaluation to be crucial and therefore require WCU to transparently evaluate the student workload on the level of each module to corroborate and adjust the credit allocation if necessary.

In summary, the experts confirm that a workload-based credit system is implemented, which considers both contact hours and self-study time. The total credit numbers meet the ECTS users guide's minimum requirements for Bachelor's and Master's programmes, and the credit load is distributed evenly over the study period. However, the fit of the designated workload of each module and the actual student workload needs to be evaluated transparently to give a foundation for the credit allocation. Moreover, it is recommended to increase the credit number for the Bachelor's thesis to make it more comparable internationally.

Criterion 1.6 Didactic and Teaching Methodology
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Evidence:

- Self-Assessment Report
- Study plans of all programmes
- Module descriptions of all study programmes
- Rules for the Recognition and Equivalence (Nostrification) of Qualifications in the Field of Higher Education of Foreign Countries
- Discussions during the audit

Preliminary assessment and analysis of the experts:

As explained in the Self-Assessment Report, all programmes under review rely on both structured in-class teaching as well as independent student work. The relation of structured classroom and practical teaching to independent work, as outlined in the study plans and module descriptions for each module, is generally approximately 40:60 in the Bachelor's programmes, while the Master's programmes rely on higher independent workload and a regular structure teaching load of only 25% on average. The experts deem this approach reasonable.

Classroom teaching is done in form of lectures, seminars, practicals, and laboratory sessions, which employ a student-centred learning and teaching approach with ample methodology. This includes modern teaching methods like problem-based learning scenarios, structured tasks for group work, and project-based learning. The methodological diversity was fostered especially during the times of the Covid-19 pandemic, when a variety of online teaching tools (video conferencing, digital whiteboards, and online tests) encompassing new teaching methodologies like flipped classroom, gamification, and group work through online repositories was developed and adopted. Digital tools like online case studies and brainstorming tools are still used in the teaching process on-site, while fully digital classes are used to facilitate guest lecturing of international experts. These include videos, audios, animations, interactive presentations, and simulations. Additionally, 3D models and virtual laboratories are regularly utilised through online platforms during lessons.

During the on-site visit, the experts discuss various aspects of the teaching methodology with the teaching staff and are satisfied with the implementation of the education, which is also confirmed by the students. However, there is general agreement of lecturers and students that more and earlier laboratory placements, which are currently only carried out in Bachelor's programmes from the fourth semester onwards, would be beneficial. To improve the laboratory experience of the students, the experts recommend limiting the group sizes for experiments to two people to grant all students hands-on practical skills in all

programmes on all levels. Besides that, the experts positively note that there are regular visits for students to scientific research institutes, various organisations, and production facilities relevant to their respective study fields such as the Landscape Construction Open Joint Stock Company, the Central Botanical Garden, and the Caspian Sea Problems Scientific Research Centre. Finally, students are encouraged to actively engage and develop own projects and initiatives, like the “Create a Green World! - ASAN Innovative Solutions Hackathon 3” and science Olympiads.

These site visits are also part of the university’s agenda to foster research among students and lecturers. Research is included in the curricula of all programmes both as separate subject as well as methodology in the modules, which includes, among other topics, like bio-statistics which the experts consider to be crucial. The students’ independent research approach culminates in the internship and the final theses. Moreover, project work or seminars with guest researchers are part of the practical teaching. However, looking at samples of final theses and project works, the experts find that there is notable room for improvement with respect to the students’ work with scientific literature. This concerns both the content-wise selection of and treatment of the sources which display a too large share of literature that is not peer-reviewed on an international level, as well as the formal aspects of citation and transparency of sources. Therefore, the experts recommend to improve the students’ skills to work with scientific literature.

Moreover, the experts are curious about the official teaching language of the programmes, as the module descriptions list both Azerbaijan and English. The programme coordinators report that the programmes are offered in both languages and that students can choose their preferred language. Most students study in Azerbaijan, but some also decide to switch to the English batch over the course of the studies. The BDF programme is not offered in English but instead also in Russian, which is wrongly outlined in the module descriptions and needs to be corrected (see section 4.1). While the experts appreciate the opportunity for students to choose their instruction language, they wonder about the huge administrative and personnel effort needed to teach every module in two languages, and how to ensure the equal quality of both modules. The programme coordinators report that many of the academic staff members teach in two languages and that, for modules in which this is not possible, part-time lecturers are invited. The equality of the content is ensured through the module syllabi which are the same in all languages, and are reworked, discussed and controlled for in the department every year. All modules are evaluated by means of course surveys every semester, as also the students confirm. However, there is apparently no distinction between the language groups in that regard. To better evaluate and compare the quality of teaching, the experts suggest to control for the language aspect in the student surveys, e.g. by including one or two specialised questions.

In summary, the experts confirm that a variety of teaching methods and didactic means are used to promote achieving the learning outcomes and support student-centred learning and teaching. The degree programmes contain an adequate balance of contact hours and self-study time. In terms of practical classes in laboratories, the experts recommend limiting the group size for experimental setups to two people to ensure that all students get the required hands-on experience. Moreover, for the Bachelor's programmes, they recommend to generally include more lab classes in earlier stages of the programmes. The experts also confirm that the students are introduced into scientific work through respective modules, the internship, and the theses. Nevertheless, in that regard, the experts recommend to improve the students' work with scientific literature. Also, in terms of the two instruction language groups, it is recommended to control for this aspect in the quality assurance processes. Furthermore, the experts confirm that it is regularly reviewed whether the utilised learning and teaching methods support the achievement of the programme objectives.

Final assessment of the experts after the comment of the Higher Education Institution regarding criterion 1:

Criterion 1.1

As part of the statement, WCU provides a revised study plan for the BDEPA programme which has already been approved for the next intake cohort. As part of this change, also the programme title was adapted and is now "Methods for Environmental Protection and Restoration". The experts are satisfied with this revised programme design and confirm that the learning outcomes, curriculum, and programme name are now coherent and constitute a purposeful study programme. However, the new programme design and name still needs to be published and harmonised in all official documents and websites. Thus, the experts reformulate their initial requirement under criterion 4.3.

Criterion 1.2

In its statement, WCU explains that the title of the BDWBA has been harmonised on all websites and in all official documents. However, on the programme's website (<https://wcu.edu.az/en/faculties/water-biodiversities-and-accessories>) and in documents linked there, the experts still find the diverting titles "Water bioresources and aquatic plants" as well as "Aquatic Bioresources and Aquaculture". The experts stress the need for harmonisation and confirm the initial requirement.

Criterion 1.3

Regarding the opportunities for internationalisation and student mobility, WCU explains that, although the so far existing partnerships do not include the programmes under

review, they provide a basic framework for programme-level cooperation. As an example, WCU initiated a cooperation with University and the Institute of Ecology of the Technical University of Berlin for fostering academic exchange, joint research, and scientific collaboration in the fields of plant ecology, biodiversity research, environmental monitoring, and sustainability science, which is demonstrated by a letter of intent. The experts highly value the university's efforts in that regard. However, they stress that these letters of intent need to be further pursued to result in specific and actual exchanges and projects. Therefore, the experts sustain their initial recommendation.

Criterion 1.4

Addressing the recommendation to establish a university specific selection system for Master's student intake, WCU explains that an official request has been submitted to the SEC to assess the possibility of introducing additional selection criteria into the admission process. The experts appreciate that the university has already initiated measures in that regard but still decide to keep the recommendation to formally point out the issue as an argument to pursue this matter.

Criterion 1.5

The university explains that the number of credits allocated to the Bachelor's theses has been increased to 12 ECTS which satisfies the experts' initial recommendation. However, this change has not yet been harmonised in all curricular documents, which needs to be done. No further information is provided regarding the evaluation of the student workload and the respective determination of the credits. Therefore, the experts stress the importance of this evaluation as part of a functioning workload-based credit system, and sustain their initial requirement.

Criterion 1.6

Regarding the recommended improvement of the students' skills to work with scientific literature, the university points out that three additional research-oriented modules will be integrated: Planning and Design of Scientific Research, Scientific Writing and Publication Processes, and Research Methods and Ethics. The experts generally appreciate this and consider the recommendation as fulfilled but, at the same time, stress that students should be actively confronted and themselves work with literature also in "regular" subject-specific modules. The experts' comment about limiting the group sizes for practical experiments was not addressed by the university, so the experts formalise this as a recommendation.

Final assessment

The experts are generally satisfied with the programmes' structures and contents. Specifically, for the MDEPA programme, they consider the made adjustments, including the name change of the specialisation into "Methods for Environmental Protection and Restoration", adequate for ensuring the consistency of programme name, learning outcomes, and curriculum. This now needs to be harmonised in all official documents and websites. Problematic remains the issue of workload evaluation and the corresponding credit allocation. Recommendations concern more specific measures for international student mobility in the programmes under review, earlier practical teaching, and better feedback mechanisms for students.

Overall, the experts consider this criterion to be **partly fulfilled**.

2. Exams: System, Concept and Organisation

Criterion 2 Exams: System, Concept and Organisation

Evidence:

- Self-Assessment Report
- Module descriptions of all study programmes
- WCU examination regulations
- Methodological guidelines on writing and evaluation of Master's dissertations
- Discussions during the audit

Preliminary assessment and analysis of the experts:

According to the examination regulations, the students' learning achievement in each module is determined employs multiple examination components, out of which 50% have to be earned throughout the semester and 50% are accounted for by the final exam of each module, all of which are held after the end of the official lecturing period of each semester.

The continuous assessment can take the forms of seminar participation, mandatory colloquiums (three per semester), individual assignments like presentations or project works (one per semester), quizzes, and class attendance. The exact weighting of the exam components is outlined in the module descriptions. On the other hand, the final exam can be written, oral, or based on a test. To be allowed to take the final exam, students must have attended at least 75% of all classes. The examination regulations contain detailed provisions about the processes and schedules for the exams for both students as well as the responsible lecturers. Moreover, specific provisions for students with permanent or temporary disabilities or restrictions are contained, which is positively acknowledged by

the experts. Measures, depending on the respective restriction, include prolonged exam times, larger font sizes, or adjustments of the examination formats.

The sum of all examination components constitutes the final grade of a module. The system, the grading bases, and its equivalents in other education systems are displayed in the following table taken from the Self-Assessment Report:

Grade Points	Latter Grade	Grade Meaning
91 – 100	A	<i>Excellent</i>
81 – 90	B	<i>Very good</i>
71 – 80	C	<i>Good</i>
61 – 70	D	<i>Sufficient</i>
51 – 60	E	<i>Mediocre</i>
less than 51	F	<i>Fail / Unsatisfactory</i>

The final results are determined by the university’s Examination Center and published on the university’s official website on the day of the exam, or within three working days in exceptional cases.

Students who fail exams can retake the exam or repeat the entire relevant subject(s) within the time until the next semester starts or during the exam session of one of the following semesters. As the students explain during the on-site visit, “summer classes” are offered in the summer break to facilitate retaking the exams. Students, with the exception of those with valid and approved reasons for missing the exam, may retake exams for a maximum of two modules per semester, once per module, without repeating the module(s). Students who missed the exam for a valid reason are permitted to take the exam once before the start of the next semester. Failure to do so will result in the absence being classified as unexcused. In all cases, the re-examination results will be assessed in conjunction with the current assessment results from the semester during which the subject(s) were originally taken. Credits earned are applied to the semester in which the subject was initially studied, in accordance with the curriculum.

Students have the right to appeal against grades within 24 hours from the publication of the exam results in the academic information system “HEMIS”. There is an Appeals Committee which consists of at least five members of the academic staff that were not involved in the original assessment.

During the on-site visit, the experts discuss the exam system with the programme coordinators and students who affirm their overall satisfaction with the organization. It is

positively highlighted that the students have flexibility to determine their exam calendars to a certain extent, as the students select the examination date for every module within their group. This helps them to manage their workload for the exam preparation. The experts are surprised by that but consider it as a modern approach that benefits the students. Moreover, the students confirm that the exam results are published on time and that re-taking examinations does not pose a problem in advancing with the studies. Feedback on the examination formats is part of the regular module evaluations.

The final exam of all programmes is the final state certification. In the BDB and BDE programmes as well as the Master's programmes, this exam takes the form of a Bachelor's respectively Master's thesis which is prepared under the guidance of a supervisor and must be defended in a public presentation. In the Master's programmes, the theses are directly related to the previous internships. In this case, the theses are evaluated by a commission formed with the participation of the department's professors and teaching staff and the hosting institution of the internship. For the Bachelor's programmes, internship and theses are independent. During the on-site visit, the experts examine examples of final theses and confirm their adequacy in terms of content, methodology, and, partly, also formalities, which are suitable for programmes on the levels of EQF 6 respectively 7. However, the formal aspect, especially regarding the use and citation of scientific literature, should be further improved (see criterion 1.6). While the experts are generally satisfied with the theses of these programmes, they wonder about the Bachelor's theses of the BDF and BDWBA programmes. In these two programmes, the final state attestation consists of a series of different examinations which, according to the programme coordinators, is prescribed by ministerial regulations for the curricula of these disciplines. The experts stress that a Bachelor's theses, i.e., an independent, written research project is essential for the recognition of any Bachelor's degree within the European Higher Education Area. Therefore, they require that a comprehensive research project equivalent to a Bachelor's thesis has to be made an integral, compulsory part of each programme.

In summary, the experts confirm that there are module-specific exams which assess the extent to which the defined learning objectives have been achieved. The types of exams are specified for each module and students are informed about the conditions for completing the individual modules. Students have sufficient time for their preparation and structural overloads are avoided. The exams are graded transparently and fairly, and students have the opportunity to review their examinations and respectively consult lecturers regarding the results. As crucial critique, the experts point towards the missing Bachelor's thesis in the BDB and BDWBA programmes and require WCU to mandatorily include a thesis in the curricula of these programmes. The experts further confirm that it is regularly reviewed whether the exams can adequately determine the achievement of the learning

objectives and whether the requirements are appropriate to the levels of the degree programmes.

Final assessment of the experts after the comment of the Higher Education Institution regarding criterion 2:

Regarding the introduction of a compulsory Bachelor's thesis/ final project in the BDF and BDWBA programmes, the university explains that "according to Decision No. 03 of the University Scientific Council dated November 27, 2025, the "Final State Examination" for the specialties "Aquatic Biological Resources and Aquaculture" and "Forestry" has been replaced by a 12-credit (ECTS) "Graduation Thesis." The provided draft study plans, which are not yet implemented, list a "Thesis" of 9 credits. Given this discrepancy and the outstanding formal introduction of the component in the curricula, the experts sustain the initial requirement until the implementation of the curricular change is officially finalised.

Final assessment

The experts are generally satisfied with the university's examination system and also appreciate WCU's reaction to initiate the implementation of a final thesis for the programmes which did not have it as a mandatory curriculum component.

Overall, the experts consider this criterion to be **almost fulfilled**.

3. Resources

Criterion 3.1 Staff and Staff Development
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Evidence:

- Self-Assessment Report
- Staff handbooks of all study programmes
- Semi-annual HR report of the HR department for 2024-2025
- Regulations on the academic title of "Professor"
- Job descriptions of department staff
- Cabinet decree "On the Determination of Teaching Workload Norms for Pedagogical Staff of Educational Institutions"
- Staff surveys questionnaires
- Discussions during the audit

Preliminary assessment and analysis of the experts:

According to the Self-Assessment Report, the academic staff at WCU is classified by the following academic ranks: professors, associate professors, senior lecturers, lecturers, and laboratory assistants. The job descriptions outline the different responsibilities of the staff members incorporating different ranks, and the distribution of their workload across teaching, research, student supervision, programme development work, and administrative duties varies. Overall, 34 academic staff members are currently involved in the teaching activities of the seven programmes under review, resulting in a staff-to-student ratio of roughly 1:19. Comprehensive staff handbooks for both departments provide information about the academic staff, their qualification, and teaching area, including short CVs, education and employment history, research projects and publications, as well as industry co-operations.

The distribution of the total staff body of the Department of Natural Sciences and the Department of Ecology and Environment, which host the programmes under review, are displayed in the following tables taken from the Self-Assessment Report:

Table 23. Number and Qualification of Lecturers of Natural Sciences department

	Academic Staff				Supporting Staff	Teaching Staff with Doctoral Degree
	Non-PhD Lecturer	PhD Lecturer	Assistant Professor	Professor		
Full-time	2	7	1	-	1	-
Part-time	1	8	1	-	-	-
Total		15	2		1	

Table 24. Number and Qualification of Lecturers of Ecology and Environment department

	Academic Staff				Supportin Staff	Teaching Staff with Doctoral Degree
	Non-PhD Lecturer	PhD Lecturer	Assistant Professor	Professor		
Full-time	6	6	2	-		6
Part-time	3	3	1	1		3
Total	9	9	3	1		9

While the experts are generally satisfied with the composition and qualification of the academic staff, they stress the importance of ensuring that teaching in the Master’s programmes is only done by teaching staff who have completed at least the PhD level education. Moreover, they discuss the low number of teaching staff at the professor level. According to the Self-Assessment Report, this is a specific title that can only be appointed by the national Supreme Attestation Commission. The regulations on this academic title specify the criteria in terms of teaching and research experience to be eligible for applying for this title. Nevertheless, according to the university representatives, the appointment by

this commission is a bottleneck for the staff development, even if all criteria for the professorship are formally fulfilled. In that regard, the experts inquire about the duty of programme management, which, as outlined in the job descriptions, lies with the responsibility of professors. However, many of the programme coordinators have no official professor titles. The university representatives explain that, because of this bottleneck for professorship awards, the University Council awards its own university professorships to the staff members who are responsible for the programme management. These are not officially recognised by the ministry but fulfil the purpose of the job assignment and were apparently also accepted within the national accreditation process. Therefore, the experts see no need for action and are satisfied that, based on their impressions of the interview sessions, the necessary knowledge and expertise for the programme management is given despite the lack of the official professor title.

According to the semi-annual report of the university's HR Department, WCU pursues the goal of internationalisation of the staff body. This includes both the hiring of foreign staff members (currently about 2% of the university's total staff are foreign), the involvement of guest lecturers, as well as strengthening the staffs' English proficiency. The experts acknowledge WCU's strategy for the internationalisation of the staff which includes both the increase of international experience of the national staff members by means of research stays and teaching work shadowing abroad as outlined also in the Memorandums of Understanding, the hiring of international staff members, as well as the attraction of guest lecturers. The university representatives explain that WCU hosts about 25 to 30 guest lecturers per semester for block lectures and research projects. While guest lecturing appears to be more common in the more internationalised programmes of the university (compare also section 1.3), it is comparatively seldom in the programmes under review. Both students as well as teaching staff would wish for more guest lecturers to bring in more international expertise. This should also include not only digital lectures but on-site teaching and practice especially also in the laboratories. In that regard, the experts recommend to further foster international guest lecturing in the programmes.

According to the semi-annual report, the HR Department is currently in the process of establishing the Teacher Development Program Centre as a centralised unit for staff development. Current development measures include training courses and workshops on new teaching methodologies and technologies, such as for digital teaching, which is exemplarily named by the teaching staff. Moreover, WCU offers academic exchange programmes for lecturers to conduct short-term teaching or research activities at foreign universities, which is confirmed by the lecturers during the on-site visit. During the on-site visit, the experts learn that multiple lecturers are currently in the process of completing their PhD education.

In terms of research, the university offers support for participating in international conferences, symposia, and scientific forums. According to the strategy, WCU pursues the goal of becoming a research-oriented university and, therefore, focuses on increasing the staffs' research output. Measures include investments in research activities, the provision of modern laboratories and equipment, as well as funding for national and international research projects. While the experts consider this a good strategy, they wonder about its implementation as the staff numbers do not appear very high to allow every lecturer to conduct research projects intensively, especially not on international cooperation levels. The lecturers explain that many of them work part-time as teaching staff at the university and part-time at research institutes. While the experts appreciate the staff's dedication, they point out that this model of staffing and workload distribution does not attribute the staff's research achievements in their university role. Instead, although all staff members explain that they somehow find time for their research projects, it appears that there is no structured implementation of the planned transformation to a research-oriented university at the staff level. Therefore, the experts recommend operationalising this strategic plan by implementing a structured concept for the distribution of the staffs' workload and responsibilities for teaching and research.

The staff performance is reviewed regularly based on different survey instruments. Students give feedback on their teaching staff in each module via the teacher survey, which is confirmed during the audit. Overall, the students are highly satisfied with the teaching staff's teaching and guidance. The lecturers also explain that, if dissatisfied, many students approach them directly in or after classes which helps them to adjust and improve their teaching. Furthermore, there is an annual self-assessment survey for each staff member, based on which their performance is evaluated in relation to predefined key performance indicators, and which is also taken into account for staff planning and development.

In summary, the experts confirm that the composition, professional orientation, and qualifications of the teaching staff are suitable for successfully delivering the degree programmes. However, guest lecturing is recommended to foster the international experience and perspective of both staff and students. It is regularly reviewed that the subject-specific and didactic qualifications of the lecturers adequately contribute to the delivery of the degree programmes. Lecturers have different opportunities to further develop their professional and didactic skills and are supported in using the corresponding offers. The lecturers' research and development contribute to the desired level of education, although the research activities of many part-time lecturers are conducted outside of the university and outside of the university-allocated working hours. In that regard, the lecturing workload appears to be very high which limits the staffs' opportunities for research activities within the university's domain. The experts therefore recommend implementing a concept for the

staffs' workload and responsibility distribution across research and teaching as part of the pursuit of WCU's strategic goal to become a research-oriented university.

Criterion 3.2 Student Support and Student Services

Evidence:

- Self-Assessment Report
- WCU student life website: <https://www.wcu.edu.az/en/page/students-life>
- WCU library website: <https://library.wcu.edu.az>
- Student handbook
- Discussions during the audit

Preliminary assessment and analysis of the experts:

According to the Self-Assessment Report, WCU offers a student support system which incorporates both academic and non-academic support measures. The academic advisory elements include mentoring, individual study planning, and regular feedback mechanisms, and the students state their overall satisfaction with the academic support provided by the teaching staff. According to the programme coordinators, each lecturer offers weekly consultation hours which are highly frequented by the students. For the support of the organisation of internships and mobility activities, there are the Internship Department and the International Relations Department. The library also offers specialised courses and seminars for students to learn the use and handling of scientific databases and other resources. The student scientific society is a student body that aims to support and improve the quality of training in terms of scientific research.

Non-academic student support includes a student-to-student tutoring service which is mainly designated for the onboarding of first-year students in terms of the university processes. This continuous service is complemented by yearly welcome sessions for new students by the academic staff. Each intake batch elects a class leader who serves as an intermediary between the students of the respective group and the university administration. Moreover, there are multiple student associations and clubs, among others in the fields of sports, arts, and music, as well as subject-specific student clubs. During the on-site visit, the students also report of a career centre which offers networking opportunities with businesses and professors, as well as mental health and general medical care support by the university's medical centre. General support facilities also include the canteen and the library (see also section 3.3). As the students explain, the support system also encompasses

measures to accommodate people with disabilities and health restrictions, which the experts positively acknowledge.

In summary, the experts confirm that WCU provides sufficient human resources and organisational structures for individual supervision and academic support of students, as well as administrative, technical, and general supporting tasks. The allocated advice and guidance on offer assist the students in achieving the learning outcomes and in successfully completing the programmes.

Criterion 3.3 Funds and equipment

Evidence:

- Self-Assessment Report
- Examples of cooperation agreements
- Library website: <https://library.tdau.uz/uz>
- Discussions during the audit

Preliminary assessment and analysis of the experts:

As a private institution, WCU has budgetary independence and can manage the finances on its own. Nevertheless, it is bound to the governmental provisions for the organisation of the education and receives state funding for it. According to the university representatives, the distribution of the total income encompasses roughly 30% government funds, 40% through tuition fees, corporate resources 30%. Corporate income stems from the university's business units such as the university hotel. The experts consider this a solid financial basis for the delivery of the programmes.

Physical facilities on campus include modern lecture halls and classrooms which are equipped with smart boards, projectors or monitors. For the practical training in the seven programmes under review, there are five laboratories (Genetics and molecular biology, Biotechnology, Hydrobiology, Food engineering, and Chemistry and environmental monitoring) and three specialised teaching rooms (Botany, Human and animal anatomy and physiology, Ecology). Other laboratories serve interdisciplinary purposes such as the construction and programming of robots and drones, among others for the use of monitoring the development of forests and landscapes. As the programme coordinators explain, field work is carried out at different partner institutes and sites in and around Baku according to the needs of the different programmes, e.g. plant nursery companies, an experimental forest, or directly at the Caspian Sea. Furthermore, there are multiple research institutes of the

Ministry of Agriculture, which are also used by staff and students of WCU for their research and teaching purposes.

During the on-site visit, the experts visit the lecture rooms and laboratories. On the one hand, they positively acknowledge the modern equipment and development programmes, e.g. for robotics, which is among others promoted by students taking part in respective competitions. On the other hand, they find that the elementary laboratories are only equipped with basic tools and instruments, which can guarantee the basic understanding of the subjects, but do not provide a sufficient environment for state-of-the-art research and teaching. As examples of missing standard facilities, the experts mention an atmosphere, soil and water processing lab, laminar airflow devices for cell cultures, CO2 incubators, state-of-the-art sequencing tools, real-time PCR machines, and a S1 level lab. They consider these amenities essential for the delivery of the programmes and therefore require WCU to provide a concept for updating the laboratory facilities to international standards. Moreover, although software applications like *AutoCAD*, GIS technology, as well as mathematical and (bio-)statistical applications like *Python* and *R* are adequately taught and used in the programmes, computer hardware appears partly to be short. The available hardware should be increased and updated, as, e.g., forestry students have to do programming and cartography exercises in groups although the experts would deem this to be an individual exercise. This shortage is also confirmed by the academic staff members who would wish for more advanced laboratory equipment for their projects. They explain that there are plans to create new stem cells lab and cell culture labs, as well as a new close fish nursery lab, but that the distribution of resources is a critical point limiting the expansion and upgrade of the labs. In that regard the experts discuss how the workflow for the planning, financing, and construction of new laboratories and equipment is designed. Based on the responses of the staff, it appears that the procedures and responsibilities are not clearly defined, and the budgeting process is very intransparent. In the eyes of the experts, this hinders the cost and time efficient flow of information and use of funds for the update of the facilities, which, especially in light of the university's strive towards research excellence, is urgently needed. To address this problem, they recommend to develop standard operating procedures for the application for financial resources.

The university library offers access to both physical as well as digital resources and provides study spaces and relevant hardware for study purposes, including PCs and scanning devices. According to the Self-Assessment Report, the collection includes roughly 35,000 printed books, more than 10,000 periodicals and other publications, 15,000 electronic books, and over 810,000 online books. Full access to the following databases is granted: *Perlego*, *ScienceDirect*, *Scopus*, *Web of Science*, *Directory of Open Access Journals*, *Directory of Open Access Books*, *Elgar Online*, *EBSCO Open Dissertations*, *Core*, *PubMed*, *WIPO*,

Paperity. All resources can be accessed via the university's online library catalogue. Similarly, the university employs an online platform for the distribution of the syllabi, course information, and literature access. WCU takes part in a project under the administration of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions to further internationalise the library. The students confirm their satisfaction with the library and digital facilities of the university, and the experts also positively comment on the library and its resources.

In summary, the experts confirm that the financial resources constitute a sustainable basis for delivering the degree programmes. The experts also positively highlight the library and digital resources. However, to ensure qualitative state-of-the-art teaching and research, the laboratory facilities and the laboratory equipment need to be updated and expanded. In that regard, also the computer hardware equipment should be increased. To improve the mechanisms for funding and reliable financial planning for the lab facilities, it is recommended to establish standard operating procedures that transparently regulate the responsibilities and processes in that regard.

Final assessment of the experts after the comment of the Higher Education Institution regarding criterion 3:

Criterion 3.1

Regarding the staff workload and its distribution, the comments the following in its statement: "substantial measures have been undertaken to enhance the management and regulation of academic staff workload. In accordance with this decision, the precise assessment of teaching, research, and administrative duties has been formally endorsed, and the relevant structural units have been tasked with developing a unified and transparent regulatory framework governing workload distribution." While the experts appreciate WCU's responsiveness to the recommendation, they find the statement to be very general and lacking concrete measures and evidence. There should be a concrete strategy respectively plan on how to support WCU's research goals in terms of staffing and workload distribution. Therefore, they decide to formalise the recommendation to have it on the record for considering the progress in a future reaccreditation.

In terms of guest lecturers, the university actively seeks to attract foreign researchers and teaching staff for guest lectures at WCU. Multiple examples of recent collaborations are outlined in the statement. The experts are satisfied and encourage WCU to continue this path but see no need to issue an official recommendation anymore.

Criterion 3.3

According to the statement, WCU has already undertaken measures to modernise its laboratories after the on-site visit. The experts appreciate these efforts and acknowledge that this improvement has to be done gradually. Nevertheless, they deplore the lack of a clear conceptual plan including timelines, milestones, specific descriptions, performance indicators, etc. Thus, they sustain the initial requirement as well as the additional recommendation specifically regarding the computer hardware.

Final assessment

The experts still consider the laboratory facilities as one of the weak points of the programmes and sustain their requirement regarding a specific concept for a timely update of the teaching facilities and equipment. Moreover, a strategic staff planning, workload management, and resource distribution mechanism would support WCU in achieving its performance goals, which is reflected in multiple recommendations.

Overall, the experts consider this criterion to be **partly fulfilled**.

4. Transparency and Documentation

Criterion 4.1 Module Descriptions

Evidence:

- Self-Assessment Report
- Module handbooks of all study programmes
- Internship guidelines
- Website of the School of High Technologies and Innovative Engineering:
<https://wcu.edu.az/en/faculties/School-of-High-Technologies-and-Innovative-Engineering>

Preliminary assessment and analysis of the experts:

After studying the module handbooks, the experts confirm that the descriptions generally provide the relevant information, including module name, module code, name of teacher/teachers in charge, the students' total workload, awarded credit points, exam formats, learning outcomes, content summary, and recommended literature. While initially confused about the different listed instruction languages, they recognise the correctness of the information. However, they note that the internship and these/ final state attestation modules are not outlined in the module handbook and therefore require to complete them also for these modules, as the existing comprehensive manual for the internship organisation does not suit the purpose of a module description. Moreover, while the experts

are generally satisfied with the curricular information that is available on the programmes' websites, they suggest publishing the module handbooks on the website of the programmes and not only of the school to make it more transparent and easier to find the information.

Criterion 4.2 Diploma and Diploma Supplement

Evidence:

- Self-Assessment Report
- Ministerial regulation "Rules on the Samples and Issuance of State Education Documents"
- Sample of Diploma Certificates and Diploma Supplements for all study programmes

Preliminary assessment and analysis of the experts:

The experts confirm that graduates of all programmes are awarded a Diploma Certificate and Diploma Supplement signed both by the university's Rector as well as the responsible state authority. The Diploma Supplement also contains a Transcript of Records which lists all completed modules, the corresponding number of credits, and the passing grade. However, the experts point out that both documents are solely provided in Azerbaijan language. While this is acceptable for the Diploma Certificate, the Diploma Supplement must be issued also in English language to enable international recognition. Moreover, as outlined in the ASIIN criteria, the Diploma Supplement needs to provide information on the student's qualifications profile, the classification of the degree programme with regard to the respective education system, as well as statistical data as set forth in the ECTS Users' Guide to allow readers to assess the individual performance in relation to other students. Therefore, the experts require WCU to rework the Diploma Supplement in terms of the outlined shortcomings.

Criterion 4.3 Relevant Rules

Evidence:

- Self-Assessment Report
- WCU internal rules and regulations manual
- WCU official documents website: <https://wcu.edu.az/en/page/official-documents>
- Websites of all study programmes

- Discussions during the audit

Preliminary assessment and analysis of the experts:

The experts confirm that all official rules and regulations of WCU are defined in respective documents, most prominently the WCU internal rules and regulations manual, and are transparently published on the university's official documents websites. Thus, they can be accessed by all stakeholders and interested third parties. As participants of all interview groups confirm during the on-site visit, these rules are well-defined, binding, and regulate the rights and responsibilities of all university members.

Final assessment of the experts after the comment of the Higher Education Institution regarding criterion 4:

Criterion 4.1

The experts review the module handbooks linked in the university's statement but still do not find descriptions for the final theses and internships, which are also modules as outlined in the curricula. Therefore, the requirement to complete the module handbooks is sustained.

Criterion 4.2

Together with its statement, WCU provides a template of the Diploma Supplement which is provided in English and contains all the relevant information, including the statistical data to assess the individual student performance. A Transcript of Records is part of the Diploma Supplement. The experts are generally satisfied but point out that, in the Transcript of Records, not only the number of credits but also the grade of each completed module needs to be outlined. Therefore, they decide to modify the initial requirement accordingly. Moreover, to further improve the Diploma Supplement, they suggest outlining the programme learning outcomes in more detail.

Criterion 4.3

The experts acknowledge that the module handbooks are now published on the main information websites of each study programme.

In terms of the redesigned MDEPA programme (compare criterion 1.1), the experts point out that the new programme design in terms of curriculum, learning outcomes, and programme name needs to be harmonised in all regulatory documents and on all websites.

Final assessment

The experts are satisfied that the university has adopted a Diploma Supplement template according to the provisions of the ECTS user's guide. Nevertheless, further improvement of

the university's documentation and transparency is necessary in terms of the completeness of the module handbooks and the outline of the students' grades on the Transcript of Records.

Overall, the experts consider this criterion to be **partly fulfilled**.

5. Quality management: quality assessment and development

Criterion 5 Quality management: quality assessment and development

Evidence:

- Self-Assessment Report
- WCU strategic development plan
- WCU action plan
- Regulations of the Quality Assurance Centre
- Samples of surveys for students, teachers and industry partners/ graduates
- Overviews of survey results
- WCU strategy website: <https://www.wcu.edu.az/en/page/strategy>
- WCU surveys website: <https://wcu.edu.az/en/page/queries>
- Discussions during the audit

Preliminary assessment and analysis of the experts:

WCU's quality assurance system is designed and implemented by the Quality Assurance Centre. The quality development goals are defined in the university's strategic plan and operationalised on the level of different structural units via the action plan, both of which are published on the university's website.

The university's quality management system includes elements of both internal as well as external quality assurance. The Quality Assurance Centre employs multiple online survey instruments directed at students, teaching staff, and industry partners respectively graduates, and encompass different topics among others general satisfaction, the learning quality and examination system, as well as the support system, as explained in previous sections of this report. Examples of the survey questionnaires were presented to the experts and stylised results of the surveys are published online.

During the on-site visit, the experts discuss the internal quality assurance processes with all stakeholders of the programmes and gain a generally positive understanding of the quality culture at WCU. The actors on all strategic and administrative levels of the university are highly engaged and eager to improve the quality of teaching and research for a positive impact on the community. However, as a shortcoming, the students mention that there is no structured feedback system to discuss or report back the results and actions taken based on their feedback surveys to the students. While the experts acknowledge this concern, they point to the surveys website on which the stylised survey results are openly published. This, however, appears to be not communicated to the students. The experts still confirm that the feedback cycle is generally closed but recommend to better inform students about the publishing of results and eventually also discuss them directly in class to foster the dialogue between the actors and ensure the continued involvement of the students in the quality assurance processes.

Also, looking at the sample survey questionnaires, the experts note that they are designed at the higher levels of the university or the various faculties. While the experts consider this suitable for general facilities like the support system, they see little value in these results for the individual programmes, e.g. concerning the feedback of potential employers and external stakeholders. Given these very general evaluations for all programmes in one, it is not surprising that the individual stakeholders are not well aware of the formal feedback mechanisms, which is criticised during the audit. Therefore, the experts recommend strengthening the feedback mechanisms with industrial stakeholders at the level of the individual programmes (see also criterion 1.3).

Likewise, this problem of generalisation also affects the usability of the results of the learning and teaching quality evaluations. While it is consoling to know that the students are generally satisfied with their learning experience in their programmes, the results may vary for the individual modules. This constitutes the level at which gradual but significant improvement can be implemented. Therefore, the experts recommend to refine these evaluations and conduct them at the level of the individual modules. This is necessary, especially to assess the student workload per module to corroborate whether the designated workload is adequate (see criterion 1.5). In that regard, the experts stress the requirement to evaluate the student workload of each module.

As an element of external quality assurance, WCU seeks international benchmarking through the participation in different international university rankings, which is part of the university's strategy towards international recognition and competitiveness. In addition, the university started to pursue the international programme as well as institutional accreditation as an instrument of external quality control and development, enhancement of

quality standards, and increase of reputation. The accreditation procedure for the seven study programmes under review is the first accreditation at WCU conducted by ASIIN.

In summary, the experts confirm that the study programmes are subject to periodical internal as well as external quality assurance in a process that includes all relevant stakeholders. The system includes external industrial stakeholders as well as the university staff and students. While the experts are generally satisfied with the scope and aspiration of the internal quality assurance mechanisms, they point out that the feedback processes should be made more precise to gather data on the programme level (from external stakeholders) respectively module level (from the students). In that regard, it is especially necessary to transparently evaluate the student workload. Moreover, to strengthen the continuous involvement of the students, it is recommended to actively discuss the results of the feedback surveys in class. The experts encourage WCU to continue its path of international benchmarking for enhancing the programmes' quality.

Final assessment of the experts after the comment of the Higher Education Institution regarding criterion 5:

In its statement, WCU explains further features and processes of its internal quality assurance system, which the experts find to be generally well-established. The experts positively highlight the transparent documentation and closed feedback loop. However, there is no comment on plans to direct the student surveys on the module level, which could be a way of evaluating the student workload (compare chapter 1.5), and the experts therefore sustain their initial recommendation.

Moreover, although the university generally states to attempt further integration of industrial representatives in the programme development, no concrete measures are described. The experts therefore sustain also this recommendation.

Final assessment

The experts are generally satisfied with WCU's quality assurance system. However, the process of workload evaluation is a crucial basis for the allocation of credit points, which is required. Moreover, the improvement of the industry involvement in the programme development as well as the module-specificity of feedback surveys should be improved.

Overall, the experts consider this criterion to be **partly fulfilled**.

E Additional Documents

Before preparing their final assessment, the panel ask that the following missing or unclear information be provided together with the comment of the Higher Education Institution on the previous chapters of this report:

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F Comment of the Higher Education Institution (10.12.2025)

The following quotes the comment of the institution:

“Western Caspian University highly values the accreditation of the bachelor’s and master’s programmes listed below by ASIIN and considers this decision an important indication of confidence in the university’s educational processes. We express our gratitude to the ASIIN expert commission for their positive remarks about the university, as well as for their valuable comments and recommendations.

The University notes that all suggestions put forward by ASIIN have been carefully reviewed, and the necessary measures in response to these recommendations have already been initiated. Western Caspian University is committed to addressing these points fully within a short period of time.

Western Caspian University highly appreciates ASIIN’s cooperation, objective evaluation, and development-oriented recommendations, and remains open to further collaboration in the future.

All remarks and recommendations outlined in the Characteristics of the Bachelor’s Degree Programmes and presented by the ASIIN expert commission have been thoroughly analysed by Western Caspian University. Each aspect — including the renewal and expansion of laboratory facilities and equipment, the implementation of more precise quality assurance monitoring with the involvement of stakeholders, the introduction of a mandatory bachelor’s thesis as a curriculum component in the Forestry Bachelor’s Degree (FBD) and the Molecular Biology Master’s Degree (MBMD) programmes, the strengthening of students’ skills in working with scientific literature, the allocation of financial resources and regulation of workload, as well as the enhancement of practical training - has been reviewed individually.

The University confirms that each of these remarks and recommendations has been systematically addressed in accordance with the criteria set by experts, and the implementation of improvement measures in the relevant areas has already begun. In addition, concrete planning has been undertaken to strengthen the University’s international strategy, increase student mobility, and promote guest lectures.

Western Caspian University remains fully committed to the timely and comprehensive implementation of these recommendations and regards the provision of criterion-based responses as a significant step in its ongoing cooperation with ASIIN.

Criterion 1.2 Name of the Degree Programme

In the Master's programme "**Environmental Protection in the Agrarian Sector,**" relevant adjustments have been made to address the inconsistencies between the Programme Learning Outcomes (PLOs) and the curriculum. In the revised programme, this inconsistency has been fully resolved, and the programme has been included in the new admission plan under its new title: "**Methods of Environmental Protection and Restoration.**"

The technical inaccuracy in the programme title on the University's website has been corrected. Currently, in the **Group IV Specialties** section, the programme "**Water Bioresources and Aquaculture**" is accurately displayed.

<https://www.wcu.edu.az/en/page/undergraduate-programs>

Criterion 1.3 Curriculum

Elective courses are determined based on the overall consensus of the student group, and the teaching process is organized in accordance with the results of this selection. Presenting similar or related modules within the same elective block provides students with alternative options within the same competency area.

We have carefully considered your recommendation. At Western Caspian University, while continuing our student-centered approach, we plan to expand the selection options for elective courses starting from the next semester. This change will provide students with more alternative choices within similar and related modules and will help maintain the content balance of the curriculum.

Master's level programmes have been updated. Starting from the next academic year, discussions are being held with industry partners regarding the inclusion of new modules in the teaching plan to ensure full alignment between Programme Learning Outcomes (PLOs) and the curriculum. In the revised programme, the specialization has been defined as "**Methods of Environmental Protection and Restoration.**"

Western Caspian University is working on improving the relevant module structures to ensure full alignment within the curricula. Within this framework, the significant role of modules such as "**Environmental Statistics,**" "**Project-Based and Applied Biodiversity and Environmental Monitoring,**" and "**Assessment and Valuation of Ecosystem Services**" has been confirmed in the programme.

These modules provide students with opportunities to develop practical skills and engage in project-based research, enabling them to understand ecosystem functions in agrarian

landscapes, analyze data using scientific and statistical methods, and conduct independent research in the field of environmental protection in agriculture. The planned enhancements will further strengthen the programme's focus on interdisciplinary competencies and practice-oriented activities.

At Western Caspian University, measures will be implemented in the **MDEPA programme** to eliminate inconsistencies between the programme title, Programme Learning Outcomes (PLOs), and the curriculum. In this regard, the following actions will be undertaken:

- Revising the PLOs and incorporating business-ecology components;
- Refining the programme title to more accurately reflect its content;
- Strengthening the interdisciplinary and practice-oriented aspects of the curriculum;
- Aligning students' learning outcomes fully with the current programme content.

These measures will serve to fully reflect the innovative curriculum concept of the programme, encompassing business and economic aspects within ecological and sustainable agriculture.

In response to your recommendation, Western Caspian University expresses its openness to exploring the integration of the business component into other programmes, for example, by allowing students to take a module from the Business Faculty as an elective course. The feasibility and appropriateness of this approach will be assessed through discussions with the University's industry partners.

Western Caspian University continues to take consistent and positive steps to enhance the quality of its teaching processes. The University implements systematic innovations both in the improvement of teaching plans and in strengthening students' research skills. Efforts to expand collaboration with partner organizations, enrich the content of internships, and integrate teaching and research activities contribute significantly to the development of students' practical knowledge and skills. These measures are carried out in accordance with the University's quality assurance strategy and will be further strengthened in the coming years.

The final project is designed as an extended academic research work aimed at demonstrating the overall knowledge and skills acquired by students throughout the programme, whereas the internship primarily focuses on the acquisition of practical skills.

Bachelor's students undertake research topics aligned with the orientation of the host organization during their internships and prepare corresponding reports. But students retain the freedom to determine their own project topics at the final stage. They may conduct research either in alignment with their internship placement or on a different topic.

Nevertheless, the University remains open to improvements in this area. Within the framework of the next curriculum update, opportunities to create a stronger link between students' selected final project topics and their internship activities will be explored. This approach can enhance students' effective utilization of practical experiences and further strengthen their project and research skills.

C Expert Report for the ASIIN Seal, Criterion 1.3 Curriculum - *Internationalisation and student mobility*, and 3. Resources Criterion 3.1 Staff and Staff Development

In accordance with the recommendations outlined in the ASIIN Expert Report regarding the necessity to foster international mobilities and international guest lecturing, the development of programme-specific partnerships to facilitate student exchanges is certainly one of the key elements in establishing well-focused collaborations and strengthening long-term ties. Western Caspian University has overall international links and ties with institutions through over 100 MOUs. The number of inter-institutional agreements within the Erasmus KA 171 framework alone is about 25. Western Caspian University has a diverse and growing number of Erasmus+ partners. Our international partners include EASD Castelló in Spain; Lithuanian Business University of Applied Sciences, Šiaulių State Higher Education Institution, and Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences; University of Economics Varna in Bulgaria; Frederick University in Cyprus; Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences in Greece; International Balkan University in North Macedonia; İstanbul Kültür University, İzmir Bakırçay University, and Çağ University in Türkiye; and Qiriazi University College in Albania. In Germany, our partner is Schmalkalden University of Applied Sciences. In Eastern Europe, we collaborate with Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, the University of Warmia and Mazury, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, and Sopot University of Applied Sciences in Poland; Transilvania University of Braşov and the University of Piteşti in Romania; as well as Cahul State University "Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu" and Comrat State University in Moldova. In Central Europe, our partners include Mendel University in the Czech Republic, and the University of Dunaújváros and the University of Pannonia in Hungary. In Italy, our partner institution is the University of Tuscia.

While many of our existing MOUs are not directly focused on specific programmes as stated in the report, they still establish a broad framework that enables programme-level cooperation. For instance, on June 16, Western Caspian University and the Institute of Ecology of the Technical University of Berlin initiated a cooperation for fostering academic exchange, joint research, and scientific collaboration in the fields of plant ecology, biodiversity research, environmental monitoring, and sustainability science. The Letter of Collaboration from Technische Universität Berlin can be found in the attached files. Your recommendation is well received, and we will aim incorporating programme-level cooperation at the time of signing MOUs.

We are actively working on initiating partnerships within Erasmus ICM, while also receiving partnership proposals from other institutions. Meanwhile it is noteworthy that within Erasmus ICM we are able to participate as a partner HEI, not a Programme HEI, and allocation

of mobility quotas for both students and staff depends on universities in Programme or Associated Countries.

We express our gratitude for highlighting the need to foster foreign guest lecturers, and we would like to add measures regarding on-site visits of foreign lecturers and scientists specifically for the programmes under review. We would also like to draw attention to previous foreign lecturers who may have been inadvertently omitted from our earlier reports. For instance, on October 3, 2025, Western Caspian University hosted an International Academic Symposium at its Gilazi Scientific Research Base to examine the current ecological state of the Caspian Sea and explore restoration and sustainable management opportunities. The following international experts participated in the event:

- Dr. Matteo Lattuada (Technische Universität Berlin, Germany)
- Dr. Denis Copilas (Vilnius Nature Research Center, Lithuania)

The link to the event: <https://wcu.edu.az/en/news/gerbi-kaspi-universitetinin-ve-xarici-professorlarin-birge-e>.

Recently, one professor and one staff member from the University of Peloponnese (Greece) visited WCU from 17 to 21 November 2025. Prof. Dimitrios Petropoulos delivered several lectures dedicated to agriculture. The link of the lecture delivered is here - <https://wcu.edu.az/en/news/international-lecture-series-successfully-held-at-western-ca>

Additionally, one of Western Caspian University's lecturers will visit the University of Peloponnese next semester to deliver lectures for one week within Erasmus KA 171 teaching mobility. We are also discussing opportunities for initiating student mobilities with the University of Peloponnese for the upcoming academic years.

Furthermore, to enhance students' theoretical knowledge and practical skills, starting from 6 April 2026, a two-week modular course on Ecology, Hydrology, and Meteorology will be delivered by Dr. Kodirov Sobirjon Mamadiyorovich from the Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Agricultural Mechanization Engineers. In addition, in February 2026, Prof. Florian Rupp, affiliated with the Technical University of Munich and the International University of Kutaisi, will visit Western Caspian University to deliver a course block module dedicated to Computational Biomathematics.

We have also recently secured one spot for a student in the Water and Bioresources programme, and one of our students will continue their studies at the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn (Poland) within Erasmus KA 171 starting next semester. Work on expanding international mobility opportunities is ongoing and will continue to progress.

In terms of international admissions and to enhance the appeal of Western Caspian University to international students, a range of measures is being implemented in key areas, including academic and scientific excellence, practical and career-oriented opportunities, social and cultural integration, and improvements in infrastructure and living conditions. Examples of these initiatives include regularly organized international conferences,

symposia, and other scholarly events. Please note that we currently have three international students enrolled in the Ecology programme at Western Caspian University: two enrolled in 2022, and one enrolled in 2024.

Once again, we would like to express our sincere gratitude for your recommendations. As an additional step in response to your suggestions, our Scientific Council has adopted a new decision to ensure comprehensive support for international lecturers and scientists. This decision provides a competitive salary in line with the local market, as well as assistance in key areas such as travel expenses and accommodation, fully covered by university resources. Please find the document among attached files.

Criterion 1.4 Admission Requirements

We highly value the experts' recommendation regarding the establishment of an additional university-specific selection mechanism at the Master's level. Currently, admission to Master's programmes is conducted centrally across the country by the State Examination Center (SEC), and the existing regulatory framework does not allow higher education institutions to implement a separate selection stage. Taking this limitation into account, an official request has been submitted to the SEC to assess the possibility of introducing additional selection criteria into the admission process. Should a positive response be provided, the required changes will be implemented in accordance with the state-regulated admission procedures.

At the same time, we note that applications of foreign citizens at both the Bachelor's and Master's levels are processed centrally by the Ministry of Science and Education in cooperation with higher education institutions. The prospect of extending this practice to domestic applicants has also been reflected in the mentioned request.

Criterion 1.5 Workload and Credits

In response to the recommendation of the ASIIN commission, and to support the principle of preparing final theses in all University programmes in accordance with contemporary scientific approaches, the credit allocation for the final project has been increased from 9 ECTS to 12 ECTS by the University Scientific Council's decision No. 03 dated November 27, 2025. Accordingly, for students currently enrolled in the IV (fourth) year, the following 3-credit "**Preparation for Final Thesis**" course has been added to their individual study plans starting from the VIII semester, and for students in other years, from the VII semester:

- **Planning and Design of Scientific Research**
- **Scientific Writing and Publication Processes**
- **Research Methods and Ethics**

Thus, to align with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), the preparation of the final thesis for the “**Biology**” and “**Ecology**” programmes has been set at 12 ECTS.

Criterion 1.6 Didactic and Teaching Methodology

According to Decision No. 03 of the University Scientific Council dated November 27, 2025, the “Final State Examination” for the specialties “Aquatic Biological Resources and Aquaculture” and “Forestry” has been replaced by a 12-credit (ECTS) “Graduation Thesis.”

The University continues to expand the resources and databases of the library and organizes special seminars and trainings sessions aimed at developing students’ abilities to analyze scientific literature, critically evaluate it, and apply modern research methods. The trainings are conducted by local and foreign professors. Traditional seminars and trainings were also held in **2025**.

[Western Caspian University - News](#)

<https://wcu.edu.az/en/news/perlego-kitab-platformasinda-teqdim-edilen-imkanlar-ve-yenil>

<https://www.wcu.edu.az/en/news/elmi-kitabxana-merkezi-telebelere-tedqiqat-konsultasiyalari->

<https://www.wcu.edu.az/en/news/elmi-kitabxana-merkezi-universitetin-bakalavr-ve-magistr-pil>

<https://www.wcu.edu.az/en/news/qerbi-kaspi-universitetinde-tedqiqatchilar-uchun-yeni-imkanl>

Starting from December 1, 2025, Professor Baseem Khan, who is listed among the world’s Top 2% scientists, teaches at the University. The Professor will conduct a training program on December 11, 2025, titled “**Training Program on Writing, Editing, and Preparing Research Articles for Publication.**” The program will cover proper structuring of research articles, academic writing conventions, principles of editing, and strategies for publishing in reputable journals. <https://www.wcu.edu.az/en/news/elmi-megalelerin-yazilmasi-redaktesi-ve-neshre-hazirlanmasi->

Criterion 3.1 Staff and Staff Development

Based on the decision of the Scientific Council of Western Caspian University dated 26 September 2025, substantial measures have been undertaken to enhance the management and regulation of academic staff workload. In accordance with this decision, the precise assessment of teaching, research, and administrative duties has been formally

endorsed, and the relevant structural units have been tasked with developing a unified and transparent regulatory framework governing workload distribution.

The implementation of this decision ensures the optimization of workload allocation among academic personnel and significantly strengthens the transparency, efficiency, and accountability of the university's management processes. These initiatives form an integral component of Western Caspian University's ongoing institutional development strategy, aimed at reinforcing the academic environment and aligning university practices with international standards.

Criterion 3.3 Funds and equipment

Following the submission of the Self-Evaluation Report for Cluster C, Western Caspian University has undertaken concrete measures to modernize its laboratories. Specifically, within the University's 400 m² Research Center Complex, the *Laboratory of Ecological and Biodiversity Studies* has been established (<https://wcu.edu.az/en/page/ekoloji-ve-biomuxteliflik-tedqiqatlari-laboratoriyasi>) The *Laboratory of Forest Growth Analysis and Dendrochronology* (<https://wcu.edu.az/en/page/forest-growth-analysis-and-dendrochronology-laboratory>) has also been commissioned.

In the building of the School of High Technologies and Innovative Engineering, the *DeepTech Artificial Intelligence Research* (<https://wcu.edu.az/en/page/deeptech-suni-intellekt-tedqiqat-ve-hesablama-laboratoriyasi>) and *Computing Laboratory* and the *Data Analytics and Networking Laboratory* (<https://wcu.edu.az/en/page/data-analitika-ve-shebek-eshme-laboratoriyasi>) have been put into operation. These laboratories enable students and researchers to carry out scientific research using modern software and advanced computational tools.

Taking into account the existing potential, the University has formed research groups composed of leading specialists. Utilizing the capacities of the newly established laboratories, these groups have begun conducting research activities both in the IT laboratories and through the development and implementation of simulation programs and virtual experimental environments in the Natural Sciences. This approach enhances students' theoretical and practical competencies and facilitates the application of contemporary teaching and research methodologies.

These initiatives align with the University's strategic objectives and are regarded as an important step toward strengthening its research capacity, integrating innovative technologies into the teaching process, and enhancing students' analytical and technological skills.

At the same time, these laboratories enable students of the Forestry programme to use state-of-the-art digital tools for forest resource management and ecosystem monitoring. In the teaching process, software such as GIS (Geographic Information Systems), Remote Sensing, AutoCAD, ArcGIS, QGIS, and drone technologies is applied. These digital platforms allow students to work with real data for forest mapping, biomass assessment, ecological risk analysis, and the optimization of forest management.

This approach reinforces students' theoretical and practical competencies and prepares them as professionals equipped for the digital transformation in the forestry sector.

In the next stage, the acquisition of advanced laboratory equipment such as Real-Time PCR, CRISPR-Cas technology, and sequencing devices is planned. The creation of virtual and digital laboratories in the natural sciences, making use of these laboratory capacities, is among the University's priority goals.

Criterion 4.1 Module Descriptions

To facilitate easier access for students and other stakeholders, each module of a program has been placed on the corresponding program's webpage. This approach allows users to conveniently and efficiently review the program structure, course content, and module-specific curriculum.

- **BSc in BIOLOGY:** https://wcu.edu.az/uploads/files/Module%20Handbook_Bs%20in%20Biology.pdf
- **BSc in WATER BIORESOURCES AND AQUACULTURE:**
- https://wcu.edu.az/uploads/files/Module%20Handbook_Bs%20in%20WATER%20B%20C4%20B00-RESOURCES%20AND%20AQUACULTURE.pdf
- **MODULE HANDBOOK: Bs in Ecology** https://wcu.edu.az/uploads/files/Module%20Handbook_Bs%20in%20ECOLOGY.pdf
- **MODULE HANDBOOK Bs degree in Forestry:** <https://wcu.edu.az/en/faculties/forestry>
- **MODULE HANDBOOK MSc in MOLECULAR BIOLOGY:** https://wcu.edu.az/uploads/files/Module%20Handbook_Ms%20in%20Molecular%20Biology.pdf
- **MODULE HANDBOOK Msc in GENETICS:** https://wcu.edu.az/uploads/files/Module%20Handbook_Ms%20in%20Genetics.pdf
- **Environmental Protection in the Agrarian Sector:** <https://wcu.edu.az/en/faculties/environmental-protection-in-the-agrarian-sector>

Criterion 4.2 Diploma and Diploma Supplement

The Diploma Supplement has been prepared in English. The Supplement includes statistical information in accordance with the **User's Guide to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)**. (Supplement attached to the email)

Criterion 5. Quality management: quality assessment and development

Quality assurance processes being monitored more precisely, by ensuring broader participation of stakeholders and conducting transparent and systematic monitoring, is one of the university's priority directions. For this purpose, modernization work is being carried out in the internal quality assurance system, workload assessment mechanisms are being improved, and the processes are being enriched with more measurable indicators. Specific indicators are defined to measure the quality of programs (e.g., student satisfaction, graduate employment indicators, scientific results, level of practical skills, etc.). Based on these indicators and the data obtained from the surveys we conduct an annual evaluation, and improvement measures are taken based on the results. The surveys are conducted anonymously on an online platform, and the results are analyzed and integrated into decision-making. The survey results are discussed in the Faculty Scientific Councils, and an action plan is prepared.

<https://wcu.edu.az/en/page/queries>

In addition, to expand the participation of stakeholders at the university, members of the Quality Control Commission include academic staff, administrative employees, students, and other relevant representatives. The members of the Quality Control Commission conduct the necessary seminars and training aimed at improving the deficiencies identified as a result of the survey conducted. At the same time, the Quality Assurance Center and the Quality Control Commission ensure that surveys are conducted online among the university's academic staff. The results are analyzed, and notifications are sent to the relevant departments. For example, the results of the survey conducted have illustrated that our staff are not sufficiently informed about the rules of safe use of online resources. To eliminate this need, a seminar on cybersecurity was held jointly by the Department of Programming and Information Security of Western Caspian University and the Innovation and Digital Development Agency. At the event, participants were provided with information on topics such as Man-in-the-Middle Attacks and Backdoor Attacks, and participants' questions were answered. It should be noted that a series of seminars in the field of cybersecurity will continue to be organized.

<https://wcu.edu.az/en/news/kibertehluksesizlikle-bagli-seminar-teshkil-edilib>

<https://wcu.edu.az/en/news/global-tehsil-standartlari-ve-beynelxalq-akkreditasiya-movzu>

<https://www.wcu.edu.az/en/news/akademik-bacariqlar-movzusunda-telim-kechirildi>

<https://wcu.edu.az/en/news/telebeler-uchun-bullinq-ve-kiberbullinq-hagqinda-telim-kechi>

<https://wcu.edu.az/en/news/qerbi-kaspi-universitetinde>

<https://wcu.edu.az/en/news/qkude-teqdimat-bacariqlari-ve-ferdi-layihelerin-hazirlanmasi>

<https://wcu.edu.az/en/news/qkude-stressle-mubarize-ve-psixoloji-dayaniqliliq-hagginda-t>

<https://wcu.edu.az/en/news/qkude-biznes-strategiyalari-ve-idareetme-bacariqlari-haggind>

There are established standard procedures and rules for monitoring teaching, examinations, laboratory activities, and program outcomes. According to these rules, the workload of the academic staff in teaching, research, and administrative activities is calculated based on precisely measurable criteria. In general, these criteria are as follows: The criteria for teaching activities include indicators such as the number of teaching hours, the credit load of the subject, and the preparation of syllabi and electronic resources. Therefore, quality monitoring in this area is carried out by controlling and checking syllabi, journals, and teaching hours. The criteria for research activities are based on indicators such as the indexing of scientific articles in international databases, participation in conferences, and involvement in projects and grants. The criteria for administrative activities are measured by participation in committees and councils, preparation of reports, and the organization of training and seminars. In addition, quality indicators such as the results of student satisfaction surveys, examination performance, and attendance are also considered. Internal audits carried out based on these criteria create conditions for balancing workload distribution and efficient management of resources.”

G Summary: Expert recommendations (13.01.2026)

Taking into account the additional information and the comments given by WCU, the experts summarize their analysis and **final assessment** for the award of the seals as follows:

Degree Programme	ASIIN Seal	Maximum duration of accreditation
Ba Biology	With requirements for one year	30.09.2031
Ba Water bioresources and aquaculture	With requirements for one year	30.09.2031
Ba Ecology	With requirements for one year	30.09.2031
Ba Forestry	With requirements for one year	30.09.2031
Ma Biology, Genetics specialisation	With requirements for one year	30.09.2031
Ma Biology, Molecular biology specialisation	With requirements for one year	30.09.2031
Ma Ecology, Methods of Environmental Protection and Restoration specialisation	With requirements for one year	30.09.2031

Requirements

For all programmes

- A 1. (ASIIN 1.5, 5) Transparently evaluate the students' workload in every module and award the ECTS points accordingly.
- A 2. (ASIIN 3.3) Provide a concept and timetable for updating the laboratory facilities and the technical equipment.

A 3. (ASIIN 4.1) Provide module descriptions for all courses, including the internships and theses.

A 4. (ASIIN 4.2) Ensure that the grades of all completed modules are outlined in the Transcript of Records.

For BDF and BDWB

A 5. (ASIIN 2) Introduce a compulsory Bachelor's thesis for all students.

For BDWBA

A 6. (ASIIN 1.2) Harmonise the programme name in all official documents and websites.

For MDEPA

A 7. (ASIIN 4.3) Harmonise the new programme design in all regulatory documents and on all websites.

Recommendations

For all programmes

E 1. (ASIIN 1.3) It is recommended to further foster both incoming and outgoing mobility specifically for these programmes.

E 2. (ASIIN 1.3/ 5) It is recommended to strengthen the feedback mechanism with industrial stakeholders at the level of the individual programmes.

E 3. (ASIIN 1.6) It is recommended to limit group sizes for laboratory experiments to 2 people to grant all students hands-on practical experience.

E 4. (ASIIN 3.1) It is recommended to operationalise the strategic plan to develop WCU to a research university by implementing a concept for the staff workload distribution of teaching and research.

E 5. (ASIIN 3.3) It is recommended to develop standard operating procedures for the application for financial resources.

E 6. (ASIIN 3.3) It is recommended to update computer hardware.

E 7. (ASIIN 5) It is recommended to conduct the feedback surveys at the level of individual modules, and discuss the results of the feedback surveys in class to ensure the continuous involvement of students in the quality assurance processes.

For the Bachelor's programmes

E 8. (ASIIN 1.6) It is recommended to include laboratory classes at earlier stages of the programmes.

For the Master's programmes

E 9. (ASIIN 1.4) It is recommended to establish a university specific selection system (in combination with the SEC) for student intake to reflect the university's own strategy and profile.

H Comments of the Technical Committees

Technical Committee 08 – Agriculture, Forestry and Food Sciences (03.03.2026)

Assessment and analysis for the award of the ASIIN seal:

The TC discusses the procedure, confirms the expert vote and emphasises in particular the necessity of a compulsory Bachelor's theses and the correction and harmonisation of the course name for the BDWBA course. In addition, the TC advocates adding an additional recommendation for all programmes regarding the duration of internships and their potential link to research topics, including final theses.

The Technical Committee 08 – Agriculture, Forestry and Food Sciences recommends the award of the seals as follows:

Degree Programme	ASIIN Seal	Maximum duration of accreditation
Ba Water bioresources and aquaculture	With requirements for one year	30.09.2031
Ba Ecology	With requirements for one year	30.09.2031
Ba Forestry	With requirements for one year	30.09.2031
Ma Ecology, Methods of Environmental Protection and Restoration specialisation	With requirements for one year	30.09.2031

Technical Committee 10 – Life Sciences (06.03.2026)

Assessment and analysis for the award of the ASIIN seal:

The TC discusses the procedure and confirms the expert group's proposal to impose a total of seven requirements. Three of these relate to biotechnology degree programmes. These concern typical points of criticism, such as laboratory equipment, verification of student workload and ECTS credits awarded, module descriptions, and the designation of degree programmes in the various documents. A major problem is that two Bachelor's degree programmes do not yet require a thesis for all students. Nine recommendations are also to be made. After a brief discussion, the TC agrees to both the proposed conditions and the recommendations, suggesting only that the last half-sentence in E1 be deleted as it is superfluous.

The Technical Committee 10 – Life Sciences recommends the award of the seals as follows:

Degree Programme	ASIIN Seal	Maximum duration of accreditation
Ba Biology	With requirements for one year	30.09.2031
Ba Water bioresources and aquaculture	With requirements for one year	30.09.2031
Ba Ecology	With requirements for one year	30.09.2031
Ma Biology, Genetics specialisation	With requirements for one year	30.09.2031
Ma Biology, Molecular biology specialisation	With requirements for one year	30.09.2031
Ma Ecology, Methods of Environmental Protection and Restoration specialisation	With requirements for one year	30.09.2031

I Decision of the Accreditation Commission (27.03.2026)

Assessment and analysis for the award of the subject-specific ASIIN seal:

The AC discusses the procedure and agrees with the list of requirements and recommendations including the changes proposed by both TCs.

The Accreditation Commission decides to award the following seals:

Degree Programme	ASIIN Seal	Maximum duration of accreditation
Ba Biology	With requirements for one year	30.09.2031
Ba Water bioresources and aquaculture	With requirements for one year	30.09.2031
Ba Ecology	With requirements for one year	30.09.2031
Ma Biology, Genetics specialisation	With requirements for one year	30.09.2031
Ma Biology, Molecular biology specialisation	With requirements for one year	30.09.2031
Ma Ecology, Methods of Environmental Protection and Restoration specialisation	With requirements for one year	30.09.2031

Requirements

For all programmes

- A 1. (ASIIN 1.5, 5) Transparently evaluate the students' workload in every module and award the ECTS points accordingly.
- A 2. (ASIIN 3.3) Provide a concept and timetable for updating the laboratory facilities and the technical equipment.

A 3. (ASIIN 4.1) Provide module descriptions for all courses, including the internships and theses.

A 4. (ASIIN 4.2) Ensure that the grades of all completed modules are outlined in the Transcript of Records.

For BDF and BDWBA

A 5. (ASIIN 2) Introduce a compulsory Bachelor's thesis for all students.

For BDWBA

A 6. (ASIIN 1.2) Harmonise the programme name in all official documents and websites.

For MDEPA

A 7. (ASIIN 4.3) Harmonise the new programme design in all regulatory documents and on all websites.

Recommendations

For all programmes

E 1. (ASIIN 1.3) It is recommended to further foster both incoming and outgoing mobility.

E 2. (ASIIN 1.3/ 1.6) It is recommended to prolong the internship and to better connect the practical learnings to scientific research.

E 3. (ASIIN 1.3/ 5) It is recommended to strengthen the feedback mechanism with industrial stakeholders at the level of the individual programmes.

E 4. (ASIIN 1.6) It is recommended to limit group sizes for laboratory experiments to 2 people to grant all students hands-on practical experience.

E 5. (ASIIN 3.1) It is recommended to operationalise the strategic plan to develop WCU to a research university by implementing a concept for the staff workload distribution of teaching and research.

E 6. (ASIIN 3.3) It is recommended to develop standard operating procedures for the application for financial resources.

E 7. (ASIIN 3.3) It is recommended to update computer hardware.

E 8. (ASIIN 5) It is recommended to conduct the feedback surveys at the level of individual modules, and discuss the results of the feedback surveys in class to ensure the continuous involvement of students in the quality assurance processes.

For the Bachelor's programmes

E 9. (ASIIN 1.6) It is recommended to include laboratory classes at earlier stages of the programmes.

For the Master's programmes

E 10. (ASIIN 1.4) It is recommended to establish a university specific selection system (in combination with the SEC) for student intake to reflect the university's own strategy and profile.

Appendix: Programme Learning Outcomes and Curricula

According to the documentation provided on the programme's website, the following **objectives** and **learning outcomes (intended qualifications profile)** shall be achieved by the Ba Biology:

Upon successful completion of the programme, students will be able to:

1. Communicate effectively in both oral and written form in Azerbaijani, and demonstrate professional communication skills in at least one foreign language related to the biological sciences.
2. Apply information technologies effectively for data collection, processing, analysis, and presentation in biological research and practice.
3. Demonstrate a deep understanding of the foundations of Azerbaijani statehood and its role in the global scientific and cultural context.
4. Plan, manage, and complete professional tasks efficiently using time management skills and strategic decision-making.
5. Collaborate effectively in multidisciplinary teams, showing responsibility, leadership, and a team-oriented approach to problem-solving.
6. Adapt to new environments and demonstrate initiative, creativity, and resilience in dynamic scientific or work-related settings.
7. Evaluate, select, and use scientific information from primary literature and credible sources to support arguments, research, or decisions.
8. Critically analyze and synthesize data using quantitative, laboratory, field-based, and/or computational biological methods.
9. Explain the relationships among structure, function, and biological processes at different levels of organization: molecular, cellular, organismal, population, community, and ecosystem.
10. Describe genetic information flow and the mechanisms of evolution, including natural selection and the origin and conservation of biodiversity.
11. Design and conduct scientific experiments, interpret results, and apply evidence-based reasoning to biological questions or hypotheses.
12. Demonstrate ethical scientific conduct, civic responsibility, and environmental awareness, recognizing the broader social, historical, and cultural impacts of science.

0 Appendix: Programme Learning Outcomes and Curricula

The following **curriculum** is presented:

I semester		ECTS
GS – B03	Business and academic communication in Azerbaijani	4
GS- B02.01	Business and academic communication in a foreign language -1	7
MS-BO1	Mathematics and Biostatistics for Biological Sciences	5
MS-BO4	Cytology and Histology	6
MS-B23	Civil defense	3
MS-BO2	Physics	5
Total:		30
II semester		
GS- B02.02	Business and academic communication in a foreign language -2	8
MS-BO7	Primitive plants and fungi	5
MS-BO3	Chemistry	5
MS-BO6	Morphology and anatomy of plants	5
MS-B11	Human anatomy and physiology	7
Total:		30
III Semester		
GEC-B04	I block 1. Philosophy 2. Introduction to multiculturalism 3. Sociology 4. Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the foundations of law 5. Logic 6. Ethics and aesthetics	3
MS-BO8	Higher plants	5
MS-BO9	Invertebrate Animals	5
ES-BO1	I block: 1. Specific foreign language 2. Academic writing and reading 3. Latin language	6
ES-BO2	II block: 1. Geobotany 2. Hydrobiology 3. Hydrochemistry	6
ES-BO3	III blok: 1. Medicinal plants of Azerbaijan 2. Flora and fauna of Azerbaijan 3. Industrially Important Plants	5
Total:		30
IV Semester		
GEC -B05	II block 1. Application of Information Technologies in Biology 2. Information Management and Database Development 3. Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship and Introduction to Business 4. Political Science	3
GS-B01	History of Azerbaijan	5
MS-B10	Vertebrate Animals	5
MS-B12	Biochemistry	5
MS-B16	Genetis	7
SG-B22	Biophysics	5
Total:		30
V Semester		
MS-BO5	Individual Development and Evolution	5

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MS-B14	Microbiology	5
MS-B15	Plant Physiology	5
MS-B17	Enzymology	5
ES-BO4	IV block: 1. Biochemistry of Hormones 2. Functional Biochemistry 3. Endocrinology	6
ES-BO5	V block: 1. Neurobiology 2. Higher Nervous System Physiology 3. Pathophysiology	4
Total:		30
VI Semester		
MS-B13	Biodiversity	5
MS-B18	Immunology	5
MS-B19	Molecular Biology	7
ES-BO6	VI block: 1. Applied Genetics 2. Ecological Genetics 3. Medical Biology	5
ES-BO7	VII block: 1. Microbiology of Food Products 2. Industrial Microbiology 3. Food Safety	4
ES-BO8	VIII block: 1. Marine Flora 2. Ichthyology 3. Oceanology	4
Total:		30
VII Semester		
MS-B20	Bioinformatics	5
MS-B21	Biotechnology	5
ES-BO9	IX block: 1. Photosynthesis 2. Virology 3. Parasitology	6
ES-B10	X block: 1. Membranology 2. Nanobiotechnology 3. Genetic Engineering	5
ES-B11	XI block: 1. Gerontology 2. Genomics and Epigenetics 3. Human Genetics	5
ES-B12	XII block: 1. Proteomics 2. Cell Biology 3. Systems Biology	4
Total:		30
1	Internship	21
2	Thesis	9
Total:		30
Grand total		240

According to the documentation provided on the programme's website, the following **objectives** and **learning outcomes (intended qualifications profile)** shall be achieved by the Ba Ecology:

Upon successful completion of the programme, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of core ecological concepts, including ecosystem structure and function, biodiversity, conservation biology, and environmental processes.
2. Apply scientific methods to ecological research by formulating hypotheses, designing experiments, collecting and analyzing data, and interpreting results.
3. Conduct ecological fieldwork and laboratory investigations using appropriate tools, techniques, and technologies, including GIS, remote sensing, and ecological modeling software.
4. Critically evaluate environmental issues and human impacts on natural systems, and propose sustainable, evidence-based solutions to ecological problems.
5. Integrate interdisciplinary knowledge from geography, climatology, sociology, economics, and environmental policy to understand and address complex ecological challenges.
6. Communicate scientific information effectively in both written and oral formats to scientific and non-scientific audiences, using clear, well-organized, and evidence-based arguments.
7. Demonstrate ethical and professional responsibility in ecological practice, including respect for biodiversity, sustainability, and adherence to environmental laws and standards.
8. Recognise and analyze global and local ecological issues, such as climate change, invasive species, habitat degradation, and contribute to conservation and restoration efforts.
9. Prepare for professional practice in ecological consulting, environmental management, conservation, or governmental roles, or pursue graduate studies in ecology or related fields.
10. Engage in lifelong learning by continuously updating knowledge and skills to keep pace with scientific and technological developments in ecology and environmental science.

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The following **curriculum** is presented:

Code	Subjects	ECTS
I semester		
GS - B03	Business and academic communication in Azerbaijani	4
GS-B02	Business and academic communication in a foreign language -1	7
MS-BO3	Higher mathematics	7
MS-BO7	General ecology	5
MS-B23	Civil defense	3
MS-B10	Soil science	4
Total:		30
II semester		
GS-B02	Business and academic communication in a foreign language -2	8
MS-BO6	Fundamentals of earth sciences	6
MS-BO2	Biology	6
MS-BO1	Chemistry	6
MS-BO5	Physics	4
Total:		30
III semester		
MS-B18	Ecological chemistry	6
MS-BO4	The biosphere and its protection	6
MS-BO8	Geographical ecology	4
GES-B01	I block - Philosophy - Introduction to Multiculturalism - Sociology - The Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan and Fundamentals of Law - Logic - Ethics and Aesthetics	3
ES -BO1	I block: - Plant Ecology - Ecology of the Caucasus - Flora and Fauna of Azerbaijan	5
ES -BO2	II block: - Hydrology - Environmental Control and Restoration - Environmental Problems of the Oil Industry	6
Total:		30
IV semester		
GS-B01	History of Azerbaijan	5
MS-BO9	Animal ecology	5
MS-B14	Air and water quality, pollution and protection	6
GES-B02	II Block - Application of Information Technologies in Ecology - Information Management and Database Creation - Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship and Introduction to Business - Political Science	3
ES -BO3	III block: - Ecology of the Caspian Sea - Aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems - Ecosystems and their conservation	6

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ES -BO4	IV block: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Atmospheric Ecology and Modern Pollutants - Environmental Management - Management of Specially Protected Natural Areas 	5
Total:		30
V semester		
MS-B19	Forestry	6
MS-B12	Landscape studies and landscape ecology	5
MS-B22	Sustainable management of natural resources	4
MS-B17	Industrial ecology	4
ES -BO5	V block: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Land Structure and Cadastre - Application of Cadastral Maps - Design and Compilation of General Geographic Maps 	6
ES -BO6	VI block: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regional Ecology - Environmental Safety of Alternative Energy Sources - Ecological Principles of Natural Resource Use 	5
Total:		30
VI semester		
MS-B11	Methods of ecological research	5
MS-B13	Human ecology and sustainable development	5
MS-B21	Biodiversity conservation	6
ES -BO7	VII block: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agrochemistry and Environmental Protection - Environmental Problems of Transport - Monitoring of Terrestrial Ecosystems 	5
ES -BO8	VIII block: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Global Environmental problems - Ecology of the Lithosphere - Natural Disasters and Their Mitigation 	5
ES -BO9	IX block: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ecochemical Processes in the Atmosphere - Chemical Pollution of the Biosphere - Ecosystems and Toxicants 	4
Total:		30
VII semester		
MS-B15	Environmental law	4
MS-B16	Ecological cartography and geographic information systems (GIS)	8
MS-B20	Ecological monitoring	5
ES -B10	X block: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Landscape and ecological conditions of the Absheron Peninsula - Ensuring food security - Ecologically clean products 	6
ES -B11	XI block: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organization of waste-free production processes - Waste recycling - Ecological assessment of waste 	7
Total:		30
VIII semester		
	Internship	21
	Thesis	9
Total:		30
Grand total		120

According to the documentation provided on the programme's website, the following **objectives** and **learning outcomes (intended qualifications profile)** shall be achieved by the Ba Forestry:

Upon successful completion of the programme, students will be able to:

1. Understand and apply basic principles of forest ecology to assess and manage forest ecosystems, recognizing their ecological, social, and economic values.
2. Demonstrate practical knowledge of forest plant biology and the ability to identify, classify, and analyze forest species in their natural habitat.
3. Evaluate the impact of environmental factors (such as soil, climate, and topography) on forest growth, development, and health.
4. Design and implement sustainable forest management practices, including conservation techniques, restoration, and sustainable harvesting methods.
5. Apply modern technologies in forestry, including remote sensing, GIS (Geographic Information Systems), and forest inventory tools to monitor and assess forest resources.
6. Understand and manage forest biodiversity, recognizing the importance of species preservation and ecosystem integrity in forest ecosystems.
7. Assess the economic value of forest resources, incorporating cost-benefit analysis, market dynamics, and economic policies related to forestry.
8. Understand the role of forests in climate change mitigation and adaptation, contributing to carbon sequestration and sustainable land use.
9. Develop and implement strategies for forest protection and rehabilitation, addressing issues such as deforestation, forest fires, and invasive species.
10. Work effectively in teams, applying communication and collaboration skills in both interdisciplinary and multi-stakeholder settings related to forest management.
11. Demonstrate ethical responsibility in forestry practice, including sustainable resource use, environmental conservation, and social equity.
12. Conduct independent research in forestry, including formulating hypotheses, designing experiments, and analyzing data, while adhering to scientific and ethical standards.

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The following **curriculum** is presented:

Code	Subjects	ECTS
I semester		
GS-B02	Business and academic communication in a foreign language -1	7
GS - B04	Business and academic communication in Azerbaijani	4
MS-BO8	Informatics	4
MS-B21	Mathematical Statistics	4
MS-B12	Labor protection	3
MS-BO1	General chemistry	4
MS-B11	Soil science	4
Cəmi:		30
II semester		
GS-B03	Business and academic communication in a foreign language -2	8
MS-BO4	Botany	4
MS-BO3	Physics	4
MS-BO2	Mathematics	5
GS-B01	History of Azerbaijan	5
MS-BO7	Meteorology and climatology	4
Total:		30
III semester		
GES-B04	I block - Philosophy - Introduction to multiculturalism - Sociology - Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the foundations of law - Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship and Introduction to Business - Ethics and aesthetics	3
MS-BO6	Systematics of higher plants	4
MS-B10	Dendrology	8
ES -BO1	I Block: - Plant Ecology - Flora and Fauna of Azerbaijan - Ecology of the Caucasus	5
ES -BO2	II Block: - Ecology - World Forests: Distribution and Composition - Forest Ecosystems	5
ES -BO3	Block III: - Recreational forestry - Forest and park farms - Greenery farms	5
Total:		30
IV semester		
MS-BO5	Geodesy	4

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MS-BO9	Forest genetics and breeding	4
MS-B17	Forest plantations	8
GES-B05	II block - Information Technologies in the Agricultural Sector (on speciality) - Information Management in Agriculture (on speciality) - Logic - Political Science	3
ES -BO4	IV block: - Ecological benefits of forests - Use of forest ecoresources - Organization of forest tourism	5
ES -BO5	V Block: - Plantation Forestry - Nursery farm - Low-Bush farms	6
Total:		30
V semester		
MS-B19	Forestry machines and tractors	4
MS-B22	Wood science and forest commodity science	4
MS-B13	Forestry	8
ES -BO6	VI block: - Forest protection - Forest fires - Forest sanitary measures	5
ES -BO7	VII block: - Forest certification - Forest legislation and management - Legal basis of forest use	5
ES -BO8	VIII block - Intensive management of farms - Establishment of intensive farms - Activity areas of intensive farms	4
Total:		30
VI semester		
MS-B24	Forest reclamation and protective afforestation	4
MS-B25	Ornamental Horticulture and Landscape Design	4
MS-B16	Forest taxation	8
MS-B18	General plantation	4
ES -BO9	IX block: - Procurement of forest materials - Integrated use of wood raw materials - Non-wood use of forests	5
ES -B10	X block: - Forest restoration work - Scrap technology in forest restoration - Planting technology in forest restoration	5
Total:		30
VII semester		
MS-B14	Forest entomology	4
MS-B15	Phytopathology	4
MS-B20	The Economics, Organization, and Management of Forest Enterprises	4

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MS-B23	Forest structure	8
ES -B11	XI block - Effective utilization of forest resources - Creation of forest and garden farms - Preliminary processing of wood raw materials	5
ES -B12	XII block: - Design of Forest Management Works - Forest Fund Inventory - Forest Monitoring	5
Total:		30
VIII semester		
	Teaching internship -1	4.5
	Teaching internship -2	6
	Internship -1	4.5
	Internship -2	6
	Final State Attestation	9
Total:		30
Grand total		240

According to the documentation provided on the programme's website, the following **objectives** and **learning outcomes (intended qualifications profile)** shall be achieved by the Ba Water resources and aquaculture:

Upon successful completion of the programme, students will be able to:

1. Understand the fundamentals of aquatic biology, aquatic ecosystems, and biore-sources, including taxonomy, physiology, and ecological interactions of aquatic or-ganisms.
2. Analyze and assess the ecological status of freshwater and marine environments using scientific methods and tools.
3. Apply principles of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture for the efficient production and management of aquatic organisms.
4. Develop and implement aquaculture systems with a focus on environmental sus-tainability, animal health, and economic feasibility.
5. Demonstrate proficiency in laboratory and field techniques used in aquatic sci-ences, including water quality analysis, plankton sampling, and fish health assess-ment.
6. Evaluate the impact of human activities and climate change on aquatic ecosystems and propose strategies for mitigation and adaptation.
7. Interpret national and international regulations related to aquatic resource man-agement and aquaculture practices.

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8. Communicate scientific information effectively, both orally and in writing, to diverse audiences including stakeholders, policy makers, and local communities.
9. Work collaboratively in multidisciplinary teams to solve complex problems in aquatic resource use and aquaculture development.
10. Engage in continuous learning and research, contributing to innovation in aquaculture technologies, resource conservation, and sustainable development goals.

The following **curriculum** is presented:

Code	I semester	ECTS
GS – B03	Business and academic communication in Azerbaijani	4
GS-B02.01	Business and academic communication in a foreign language -1	7
MS-BO5	General Biology	6
MS-BO1	General Chemistry	5
MS-BO3	Physics	5
MS-BO7	Introduction to the Specialty and History of Its Development	3
Total:		30
II semester		
GS-B02.02	Business and academic communication in a foreign language -2	8
GS-B01	History of Azerbaijan	5
MS-BO4	Botany	7
MS-BO2	Mathematics	5
MS-B10	Physiology of Aquatic Plants	5
Total:		30
III semester		
GES-B04	I block <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Philosophy - Introduction to multiculturalism - Sociology - Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the foundations of law - Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship and Introduction to Business - Ethics and Aesthetics 	3
MS-B12	Zoology	6
MS-BO9	Computer Science	4
MS-B13	Ecology	4
ES -B01	Block I <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specialized Foreign Language - Academic Writing and Reading - Latin Language 	6
ES -B02	Block II: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aquatic Toxicology - Hydrochemistry - Hydromorphology 	7
Total:		30
IV semester		
MS-B16	Planktology (or Plankton Biology)	5
MS-B22	Occupational Safety	4
MS-B14	Biochemistry	6
MS-B24	Civil Defense	3

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GES-B05	II block - Information technologies in agriculture (by specialization) - Information management in agriculture (by specialization) - Logic - Political science	3
ES -B03	Block III - Methods for Calculating Bioresources - Methods for Assessing Damage to Water Bodies - Efficient Use of Natural Resources	4
ES -B04	Block IV - Water Bodies of Azerbaijan - Water Pollution and Its Control - Sanitary Hydrobiology	5
Total:		30
V semester		
MS-B06	Microbiology	5
MS-B08	Meteorology and Climatology	5
MS-B15	Aquaculture of Aquatic Plants	5
MS-B19	Monitoring and Research Methodology in Aquaculture	7
ES -B05	Block V - Fish Anatomy and Physiology - Fish Embryology - Fish Taxonomy and Ecology	4
ES -B06	Block VI - Fish Histology - Fish Cytology - Fish Embryology	4
Total:		30
VI semester		
MS-B11	Fisheries	6
MS-B21	Aquaculture of Aquatic Invertebrates	5
ES -B07	Block VII - Artificial Fish Breeding - Genetics and Selection of Fish - Fish Diseases	5
ES -B08	Block VIII - Marine Flora - Plankton and Its Cultivation Technology - Oceanography	5
ES -B09	Block IX - Hydrology - Decorative Aquatic Plants - Marsh Aquatic Plants	5
ES-B10	Block X - Fishing, Fishing Gear and Techniques - Sport Fishing and Fish Tourism - Ornamental Fishery	4
Total:		30
VII semester		
MS-B17	Fish Aquaculture	6
MS-B18	Fish Nutrition	5
MS-B20	Statistics	4
MS-B23	Economics, Marketing and Management of the Sector	4

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ES -B11	Block XI - Environmental Law - Fisheries Legislation - Ecological Standardization, Monitoring, Expertise, and Audit of Water Bodies	5
ATES-B12	Block XII - Biophysics - Bioinformatics - Computer Modeling in Biology	6
Total:		30
VIII semester		
1	Internship	21
2	Final State Attestation-FSA	9
Total:		30
Grand total		240

According to the documentation provided on the programme's website, the following **objectives** and **learning outcomes (intended qualifications profile)** shall be achieved by the Ma Genetics:

Upon successful completion of the programme, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate advanced theoretical knowledge in classical, molecular, population, and cytogenetics, including the principles of heredity, variation, and gene-environment interactions.
2. Apply modern laboratory techniques such as PCR, gel electrophoresis, DNA/RNA extraction, gene sequencing, and karyotyping in genetic research and diagnostics.
3. Design and conduct independent scientific research in the field of genetics using appropriate methodologies, experimental designs, and data analysis techniques.
4. Critically evaluate and interpret genetic data, including genetic linkage, mapping, and mutation analysis, using both statistical and bioinformatic tools.
5. Communicate scientific findings effectively, both orally and in writing, in academic, clinical, or applied settings.
6. Demonstrate practical competence in using genetic techniques in applied fields such as medical genetics, agricultural genetics, conservation genetics, and biotechnology.
7. Apply ethical principles and biosafety standards in the planning and execution of genetic research and in the management of genetic information.
8. Collaborate effectively in interdisciplinary teams and contribute to problem-solving in complex biological systems involving genetics.
9. Pursue further academic or professional development in genetics or related fields, including doctoral studies or employment in research institutions, healthcare, or biotechnology industries.

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The following **curriculum** is presented:

Semester	Course Title	ECTS
I Semester		
HS – B01	Foreign Language	6
GSS-B01	Modern problems of biology	4
GSS-B02	History and methodology of biology	2
MSS-B04.01	Molecular biomethods	4
MSS-B04.04	Cytogenetics	6
ES-B05.01	I block: - Biological diversity - Molecular biology of the cell	8
	Total	30
II Semester		
HS – B03	Psychology	2
MiF – B03	AMTSF: Biotechnology and genetic engineering	4
MSS-B04.05	Bioinformatics	4
MSS-B04.02	Molecular genetics	6
MSS-B04.03	Genomics	6
ES-B05.02	II block: - Population genetics - Transcriptomics and proteomics	8
	Total	30
III Semester		
1	Higher Education Pedagogy	4
2	Humanities Elective (choose one): - Economics - Philosophy	2
3	Immunogenetics	8
4	Methodology of Scientific Research	8
5	Elective Course Block III (choose one): - Human Genetics - Genetics of Microorganisms - Biostatistical Software	8
IV Semester		
	Total	30
1	Research Internship	6
2	Scientific-Pedagogical Internship	6
3	Dissertation Preparation and Defense	18
Grand Total		120

According to the documentation provided on the programme’s website, the following **objectives** and **learning outcomes (intended qualifications profile)** shall be achieved by the Ma Molecular Biology:

Upon successful completion of the programme, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate in-depth theoretical knowledge of molecular processes that regulate gene expression, cell signaling, replication, transcription, translation, and DNA repair.
2. Apply modern molecular biology techniques, including PCR, qPCR, electrophoresis, recombinant DNA technologies, CRISPR, cloning, sequencing, and proteomics.
3. Design, implement, and evaluate scientific experiments related to molecular and cellular biology, applying appropriate experimental strategies and laboratory practices.
4. Analyze and interpret molecular data using statistical tools, bioinformatics platforms, and computational biology techniques.
5. Integrate interdisciplinary knowledge from genetics, biochemistry, cell biology, and systems biology to solve complex biological problems.
6. Communicate scientific concepts and findings effectively through oral presentations, scientific writing, and data visualization tailored to both academic and non-academic audiences.
7. Demonstrate awareness of bioethical issues, biosafety regulations, and responsible conduct in molecular biological research and its applications.
8. Work independently and collaboratively in research teams, contributing to innovative approaches in diagnostics, therapeutics, and biotechnology.
9. Pursue advanced academic or professional paths, including PhD programs or careers in biomedical research, clinical laboratories, pharmaceutical and biotech industries, and academic institutions.

The following **curriculum** is presented:

	I semester	ECTS
HS – B01	Foreign Language	6
GSS-B01	Modern Problems of Biology	4
GSS-B02	History and Methodology of Biology	2
MSS-B04.01	Molecular evolution	6
MSS-B04.04	Molecular biology of photosynthesis	6
MSS-B04.05	Proteomics	6
Total:		30
II semester		

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HS – B03	Psychology	2
GSS – B03	AMTSF: Methods of Structural Biology	4
MSS-B04.02	Genetic and protein engineering	4
MSS-B04.03	Genomics	6
MSS-B04.06	Biostatistics	6
ES-B05.01	I block: -Structural and functional mechanisms of biological macromolecules -Protein–protein interaction mechanisms	8
Total:		30
III semester		
HS – B02	Higher Education Pedagogy	4
HS – B04	Elective: - Economics - Philosophy	2
MSS-B04.07	Research methods of molecular biology	8
ES-B05.02	II block: - Mechanisms of regulation of the expression of genetic information Epigenetics and gene regulation	8
ES-B05.03	III block: Molecular mechanisms of biological signal transduction Molecular phytopathology	8
IV semester		
Total:		30
1	Research Internship	6
2	Scientific-Pedagogical Internship	6
3	Dissertation Preparation and Defense	18
Grand total		120

According to the documentation provided on the programme’s website, the following **objectives** and **learning outcomes (intended qualifications profile)** shall be achieved by the Ma Environmental Protection in Agriculture:

Upon successful completion of the programme, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate advanced knowledge in the principles of environmental protection, agroecology, soil and water resource management, and ecological sustainability in agricultural systems.
2. Apply sustainable agricultural practices that minimize the environmental impact of farming activities, while promoting soil health, water conservation, and biodiversity preservation.
3. Assess and mitigate environmental risks associated with agricultural practices, including climate change, water scarcity, and the degradation of ecosystems and biodiversity.

4. Design and implement environmental protection strategies to improve agricultural sustainability, considering both local and global ecological challenges.
5. Analyze and interpret data related to environmental monitoring, agricultural practices, and ecosystem health using scientific and statistical methods.
6. Understand and navigate environmental policies and legal frameworks, including regulations related to land use, water management, pollution control, and conservation at local, national, and international levels.
7. Conduct independent scientific research on environmental protection in agriculture, developing innovative solutions for sustainable farming systems.
8. Communicate research findings effectively, both orally and in writing, to academic, policy-making, and industry audiences, including the use of visual data representation techniques.
9. Work collaboratively in interdisciplinary teams, addressing complex environmental challenges in agriculture through integrated approaches involving ecology, economics, policy, and technology.
10. Adopt ethical and socially responsible practices in environmental protection and agricultural decision-making, with an emphasis on sustainability, equity, and the long-term well-being of communities and ecosystems.

The following **curriculum** is presented:

Code	Name of subject	ECTS
HS – B01	Foreign Language	6
GSS -B01	Modern problems of ecology	4
GSS -B02	History and methodology of ecology	2
MSS -B04.01	Organization of ecological business	6
MSS -B04.02	Micro and macroeconomics (level III)	6
MSS -B04.03	Ecological problems of efficient use of natural resources	6
	Total:	30
MSS -B04.05	Philosophy of economics	4
MSS -B04.04	Environmental monitoring	6
MSS -B04.06	Environmental waste treatment	6
MSS -B04.07	Environmental problems of the chemical and petrochemical industries	6
ES-B05.01	I block: - Environmental problems arising from the development of agriculture - Current problems of ecologically clean production in the agricultural sector	8
	Total	30
HS – B02	Higher Education Pedagogy	4
HS – B02	Psychology	2

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3	Elective Course: - Academic Ethics - Organizational Behavior - Creativity and Leadership	2
MSS -B04.08	Environmental problems caused by the fuel and energy complex	6
ES-B05.02	II block: - Territorial organization of livestock farming and environmental protection - Livestock development and ecological problems	8
ES-B05.03	III block: - Agroclimatic resources and agriculture - Agrochemistry and environmental protection	8
	Total:	30
	Internship: Research	6
	Internship: Scientific and pedagogical	6
	Preparation and defense of the thesis	18
Grand total		120